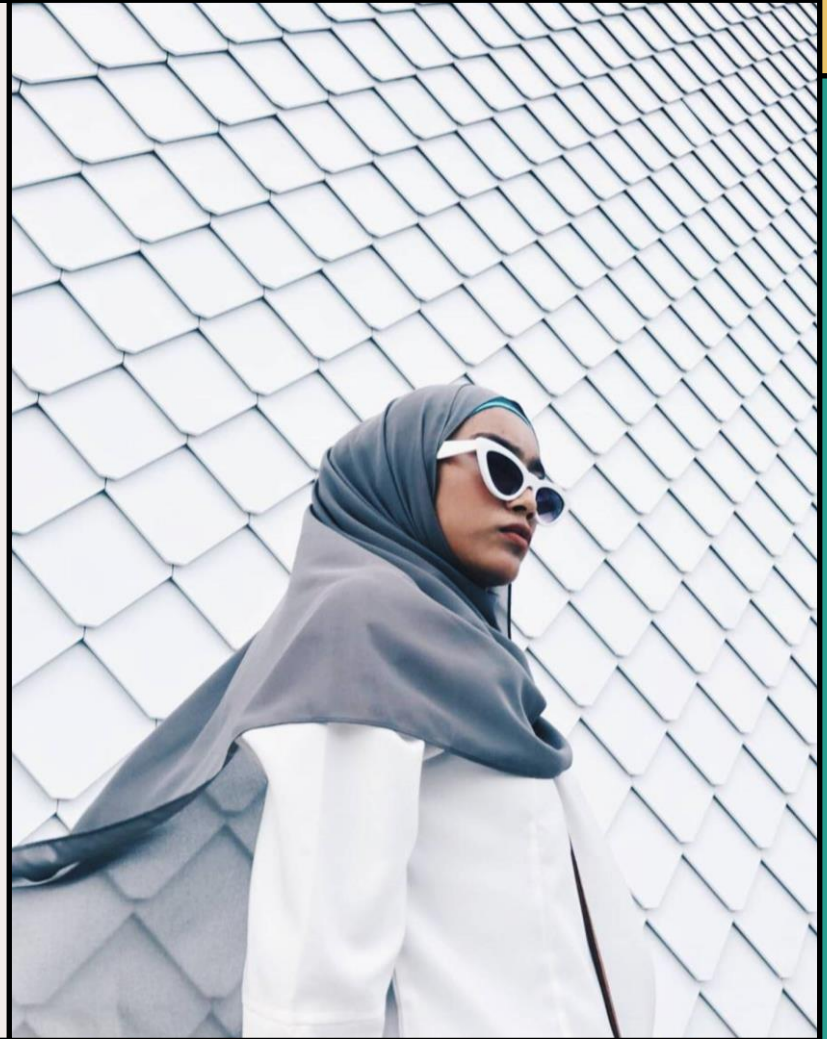


# My Journey

from storytelling to paper

Kim Firmston



# Make These Three Groups

And then get into groups of two or three within those groups.

People who immigrated here as older youth or teens



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

People who immigrated as younger kids or whose parents immigrated.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Canadians here for multiple generations.



“

The first time I was on a plane was when I left for Canada, and I was alone.

”



# How This Started

YMCA's Newcomer Teen Writing Workshop was run November, 2013 through a partnership between Calgary Public Library and the YMCA's program for newcomer teens (YMAP). Within this project we broke down the experience of moving to another country as a teen, to be recorded and become part of our local story.





# The Objectives

- ❖ To give voice to the experiences of newcomer teens in Calgary.
- ❖ To deepen the understanding of issues facing newcomer teens and find opportunities for improvement.
- ❖ To foster an understanding among Canadian-born teens of newcomer teen experiences
- ❖ To support developing literacy skills
- ❖ To strengthen relationships between newcomer teens based on shared experiences.



# Care in Approach

The goal of this project both then and now when you run it in your classes, is never to cause harm to the child or teen taking part in it. The newcomer teen or child directs the experience. They only reveal what they want in each of the project's categories. The way this project is set up, there is very little prying and more opportunity to express and share only so much as the student is comfortable with. Even with this, they will still meet the objectives.

# How do we get there?

There are three main stages in this project

Leaving Home.



Arriving Here (the first few months).



Finding a what might be a sliver of home.





Ask your partner

**Group One**

*People who immigrated here as older youth or teens*

**WHAT WAS YOUR REACTION WHEN YOU WERE TOLD YOU WERE LEAVING FOR CANADA?**

How were you told and who told you?

**Group Two**

*People who immigrated as younger kids or whose parents immigrated.*

**HOW / WHY DID YOUR PARENTS CHOOSE CANADA?**

What was their reaction to leaving home? If you were there, what was yours?

**Group Three**

*Canadians here for multiple generations.*

**WHAT WAS A TRANSFORMATIVE EVENT YOU EXPERIENCED AND HOW WERE YOU TOLD ABOUT THE EVENT BEFORE IT HAPPENED?**

What was your reaction?

You have 10 minutes

Let's go through them.

PART ONE  
Leaving Home...



# Please be aware

We NEVER ask our students about what was happening before the move, their family circumstance, or if there was trauma or tragedy. Instead we focus on the emotions of being told that they are going someplace that they are most likely unfamiliar with or have limited information and the knowledge that they will be giving up the familiar for something unknown.

IF they choose to share beyond this, we honor that openness. However, this is never demanded of them. Our mission is not to open emotional wounds.



# PART TWO

## Arriving in Canada

Ask your partner

### Group One

*People who immigrated here as older youth or teens*

**WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OVER THE FIRST FEW MONTHS OF BEING IN CANADA**

Who did you live with? Were there any things you found weird?

### Group Two

*People who immigrated as younger kids or whose parents immigrated.*

**OVER THE FIRST FEW MONTHS, WHAT DID YOU OR YOUR PARENTS MAKE OF CANADA?**

Do you remember any stories?

### Group Three

*Canadians here for multiple generations.*

**AS YOU REALIZED THAT YOU WERE CHANGING, HOW DID YOU REACT?**

What did you think of your new circumstances?

You have 10 minutes

# Find ways of looking for the light

Just because we are talking about transformation, it doesn't mean that we need to focus on the darkness. There are a lot of funny things that happen when we are adjusting to a new environment or state of being. It is really easy to get dark during this project, so as the instructor, ask questions and lead your students towards the light.

For example: What was the weirdest thing you encountered? What kinds of things made you say "huh?" Was there any food you missed? Was there any food you found that you really liked? What did you think of the weather?





Oh, WOW. I'm Canadian!

A quote from a comedian I no longer remember.



# Dig Deep and Find Home

As our students and ourselves go through these big transformative experiences that rock our world, we are slowly able to find home in the small things. It can be a candy from home that you can find here. It could be a new best friend or a new sport or even a club. It could be a moment of peace deep in the night. But whatever it is you finally find yourself thinking, "Okay, maybe this place can be home. At least for now."

Ask your partner

## PART THREE

That sliver that  
could be  
home.

ALL GROUPS

WHAT MADE YOU THINK THAT YOU WOULD BE OKAY WITH  
THIS CHANGE?

WHAT EXACT, VERY SMALL, THING LET YOU KNOW THAT IT  
WOULD BE ALL RIGHT?

WHAT WAS THE EMOTION ATTACHED TO IT?

You have 10 minutes



# Sometimes it's the smallest things

Remind your students that this revelation doesn't have to be huge. It can be something very small. I remember for me, when I moved to Montreal, not speaking the language, feeling very out of my element, I turned on CBC and heard the same program, Coast to Coast to Coast, as I had from Calgary. I suddenly felt grounded. I let out a breath. Things felt alright again and I knew I would make it in this strange new land.



# Ways to help your Students Succeed

## MIXED CLASS

You can partner your ESL students with students proficient in the language of your school. Have them help with the writing, spelling words, fixing sentences. Between the two of them, they can craft a story of before during and after which can be published as a class book.

## ESL ONLY

Another way to help your students is to allow them to writing in their own language. After they have their story down, they can translate it and work with the instructor and teacher's aides to correct spelling and grammar. They can then use their own story to practice reading.

## SENSES DICTIONARY

Have your students create a senses dictionary for home and for here. You can also make an emotion dictionary and talk about how different emotions affect our bodies. You can tie this back to the senses dictionary. Giving students words to describe what they went through will help their writing and communicating.

SMELL / TASTE	SIGHT	SOUND	TOUCH

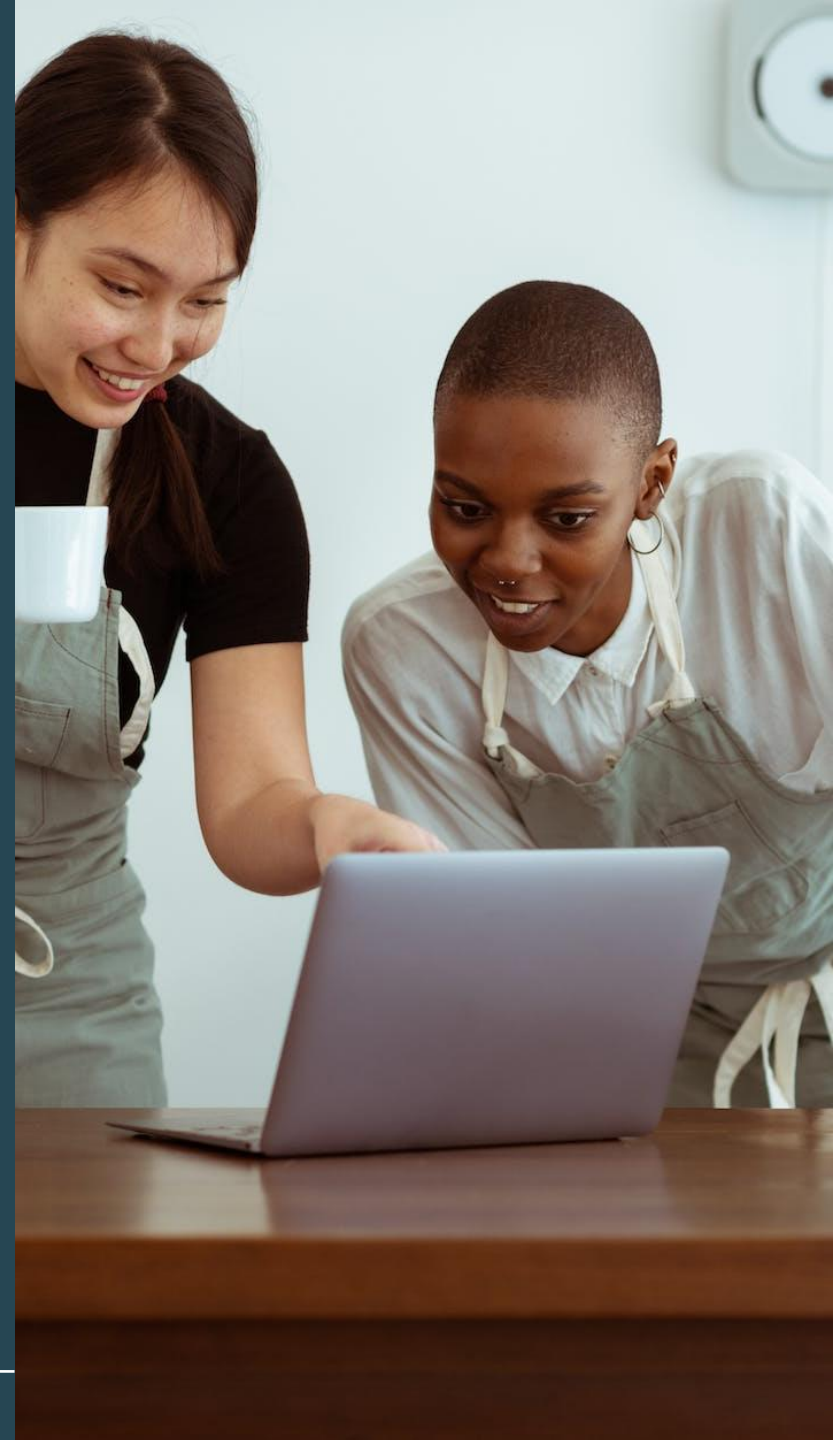
Joyous feelings	Every Day Feelings	Sad /Angry Feelings



# Have A Clear Goal

Before you start this, have a clear goal in mind for what you want students to get out of this project. If you have a mixed class, maybe you want to pursue a greater understanding. If you only have a group of ESL students, then perhaps you are using this to help them connect with their new country and gain a better understanding of English by using their own stories to inspire them.

Be ready for emotion and let the students know they are in a safe space. Getting them to help make parameters for this project is always a great idea too.



# The AWCS And You

How our writing centre can help you  
and your students.

The logo for AWICS (Alexandra Writers' Centre Society) is presented within a white rounded rectangle. The letters 'A', 'W', and 'S' are rendered in a dark teal, serif font. The letter 'I' is replaced by a stack of three books of varying heights and colors (tan, brown, and dark brown). The letter 'C' is also in the dark teal serif font. All letters sit on a dark teal horizontal base.

AWICS

ALEXANDRA WRITERS' CENTRE SOCIETY

Three white triangles of varying sizes are arranged in a fan shape on the left side of the text.

JOIN US AND MENTOR A  
PASSION FOR WRITING

Three white triangles of varying sizes are arranged in a fan shape on the right side of the text.

## WHO WE ARE

The Alexandra Writers' Centre provides a friendly and encouraging environment for writers of all skill levels and ages. So whether you have a couple of hours or a few weeks, are a beginner or been writing for years, we have something to pique your interest.



## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

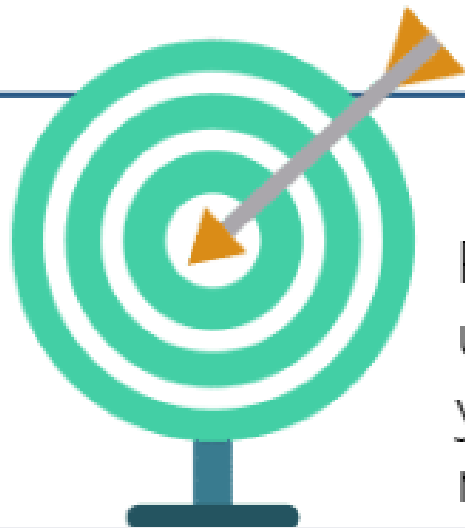


- 25% discount on classes and workshops
- 1 free visit with our Writer in Residence
- Free drop-in programs
- Guest Speakers, Author Discussions, and Members Only programs
- Free access to our Literary Salon



## **J. MICHAEL FAY SUBSIDY PROGRAM**

Based on the philosophy of writers supporting writers, the J. Michael Fay Subsidy Program is available to anyone who finds themselves in financial need.



## **HERE FOR TEACHERS**

Flexibility is the key to success. Work with us to design a program individualized for yourself, your teachers', or your students' needs, time, and budget.

## **PD DAYS FOR TEACHERS AT YOUR PLACE OR OURS**

Develop your literary skills in a no-fail atmosphere — then take what you've learned back to the classroom along with great resources to share.



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## **AWCS IN THE CLASSROOM**

By building students' literary toolbox, we support writing, journaling, and storytelling development from the early grades all the way to the grade 12 classroom.



## GROW A PASSION FOR WRITING

With so many after-school programs to choose from, as well as summer camps, workshops, and events, we help youth grow a passion for writing.

JOIN US TODAY

SCAN ME



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