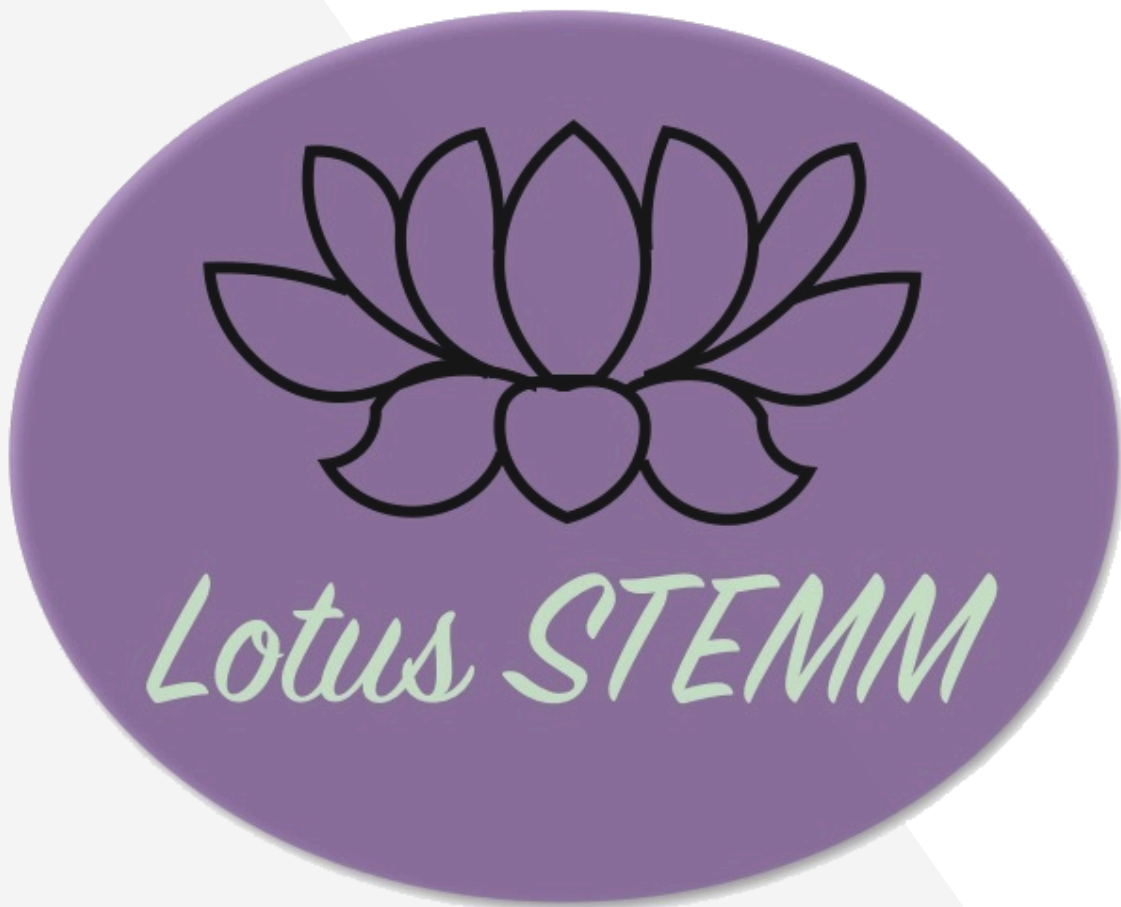


LOTUS STEMM

ANNUAL REPORT

REPORT NO. 025-01



2025

LOTUSSTEMM@GMAIL.COM

WWW.LOTUSSTEMM.ORG

@LOTUS_STEMM (X) @LOTUSSTEMM (INSTAGRAM) @LOTUS STEMM (FACEBOOK)

Land Acknowledgement

Lotus STEMM's hub of operation is located in Peel Region in Canada.

We would like to begin by acknowledging the land on Turtle Island where Lotus STEMM operates, which includes the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the territory of the Anishinabek, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Ojibway/Chippewa peoples; the land that is home to the Métis; and most recently, the territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation who are direct descendants of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Lotus STEMM also has presence across Turtle Island on the traditional unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Coast Salish Nations, and the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut'ina Nation, whose ancestral lands we touch upon.

Lotus STEMM acknowledges the land as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on and enjoy.

Lotus STEMM is humbled and honoured to have a global reach, noting the Pan-Indigenous communities around the world where our international team works and lives.

Lotus STEMM respects diversity of beliefs and integrates cultural wisdom, traditions, and knowledge in the work that we do. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land and by doing so, give our respect to its first inhabitants, working together towards an equitable society.

In Ruth Koleszar-Green's paper, "What is a Guest? What is a Settler?", published in the Fall 2018 edition of Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry, she

Mr. Arshdeep S. Phagoora



notes an important distinction that I wish to highlight here, as part of our Land Acknowledgement:

Settlers do the bare minimum when it comes to acknowledging the land (if they do anything at all) and try to absolve themselves of any further actions or responsibilities.

Guests, on the other hand, acknowledge the many responsibilities and expectations that are required of them. A major aspect of this is showing up in solidarity with Indigenous peoples when it comes to expectations of decolonization of the land, including: stewardship of the land, and protecting precious resources: water, animals, plants, and all of their ecosystems, to ensure that there is abundance for all life that is yet to come. We cannot, she states, "decolonize the mind" without actively supporting decolonization of the land. Otherwise, we are continuing the ongoing capitalistic land grabs, resource extraction, and perpetuating irreversible damage to the environment.

As a Guest, myself, I call on all of us to be good Guests, and actively disrupt colonial practices and exploitation of the environment.

Thank you.

Table of Contents

Land Acknowledgement.....	2
Table of contents.....	3
CEO's Statement.....	4
Chair's Statement.....	5-6
Treasurer's Statement.....	7-9
Accountant's Financial Statement.....	10-11
HR Dashboard.....	12
About Lotus STEMM.....	13
Our Impact.....	14
Programs Offered.....	15
Degrees of Success	16-20
STEM Outreach.....	21-22
Girls and Women in Science.....	23-24
Paksh Program.....	25-27
Multilingual Science Communication (Award-winning).....	28-32
Breaking Barriers.....	33-51
In The Media.....	52



CEO's statement

Working on Lotus STEMM for 7 years, but really longer since before it was registered, has been one of the most challenging and rewarding tasks I have ever taken on in life. I look at this past year with mixed emotions: we've had a number of highs riddled with challenges, but what is growth without challenges?

Being **awarded funding from Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada** for a project that I had thought about at the inception of Lotus STEMM has been one of the highs I speak of. It provided validation for the project and the need to push for systemic change around women and girls, rather than focusing on changing the women. A girl or woman needs more than words, she needs others who surround her and influence her decisions to understand the levels of barriers she is facing or will face, and figure out how to support her. With this 3 year long project, we are in a position of not only implementing GBA+ methodology, but to work with the South Asian women in STEMM that we are developed to support. With the involvement of these women, Lotus STEMM has identified a number of barriers that we can use to create workshops for key stakeholders in their lives: parents, educators, employers and community leaders.

No project can have success without an amazing team behind it. In the last 12 months, we've developed a team, all of who have lived experiences as South Asian women in STEMM, that is trustworthy and dedicated. A team that has become my ongoing support, while easing up my "job" as the CEO. I KNOW that they will truly represent and embody what the project needs with empathy, understanding, and a keen drive to influence the current environment. **Thank you Anjali Barak, Dr. Sanzida Shams, Bhavya Abbi, Gayathri Shukla (Campfire Kinship), and Dr. Rida Abboud and Dr. Caroline Claussen (evaluators).**



Roopali Chaudhary, PhD

WAGE is not the only success we've had in this past year. Lotus STEMM's establishment as an organization focusing and leading the way in multilingual and multicultural science communication in Canada was further solidified when we received the **CASCADE Award** from the Canadian Association of Science Centres (CASC). It was amazing to receive the recognition, and with my CEO hat on, here is to more partnerships to help us bring science literacy that is culturally informed and multilingual to the community. When an elder in the community "blesses us" for talking about cardiovascular health and misinformation, I know that this work is still much needed!

On a personal level, I feel humbled and immensely grateful to have received the **King Charles III Coronation Medal** in recognition of the work for inclusive science. Lotus STEMM has allowed me to make strides in my own career that I had not imagined possible before.

Furthermore, every year when I sit down to reflect on our previous year, I always think we did not accomplish much. BUT, this year, I'm humbled that our highest expense has been salaries. Lotus STEMM has truly become the organization that is providing opportunities. This makes me extremely proud, and is worth all the struggles over the years.

With heartfelt gratitude, deep humility, and excitement for the future, thank you for being a part of this journey!

Chair's statement

Dear Members, Volunteers, Supporters, and Friends of Lotus STEMM,

As we gather to mark the completion of yet another inspiring year—our **seventh**—I feel a deep sense of pride and gratitude for the journey we have shared. What began as a vision to create a more inclusive and empowering space for South Asian women in STEMM has evolved into a national movement grounded in resilience, representation, and impact.

Lotus STEMM was born out of a personal and collective need—a need to be seen, to be heard, and to belong in spaces where we have traditionally been underrepresented. As an immigrant woman in STEMM with roots and experiences stretching from India to Singapore, Boston, California, and now Canada, I know firsthand the isolation, the bias, and the barriers. But I also know the transformative power of *community, mentorship, and opportunity*. This organization continues to embody those values and more. Serving as Chair of the Board of Directors continues to be a profound honor.

2025 has been a milestone year for Lotus STEMM. Our progress on the *Breaking Barriers* project, supported by the WAGE (Women and Gender Equality) grant, has been both impactful and affirming. One of the key highlights has been the successful completion of our focus groups and surveys, which received nearly 200 thoughtful and powerful responses. These insights are invaluable and will directly inform our upcoming policy recommendations and program development—ensuring our work remains grounded in evidence and responsive to the real needs of South Asian women in STEMM.



Vidya Chamundeswari Narasimhan, PhD

To support this work, we were proud to bring on board Canada Summer Jobs students and a dedicated team of volunteers, all of whom contributed significantly to the success of the WAGE grant activities. Their energy and commitment helped bring fresh perspectives and momentum to our research and outreach.

We're also excited to share that we're currently in collaborative conversations with several organizations to co-develop workshops, events, and activities aligned with the goals of the WAGE grant. These partnerships promise to extend the reach and depth of the *Breaking Barriers* project, creating more inclusive and impactful spaces across communities.

This year also marked an exciting expansion of our leadership team. We warmly welcomed new board members who bring with them fresh perspectives, diverse expertise, and a shared passion for our mission. I wish them all the very best as they step into their roles. Their presence signals a new chapter—one that promises stability, strengthened governance, and a deeper strategic focus.

Chair's statement

We have also been active in our pursuit of additional support, having applied to several new grants to sustain and scale our programs nationally. Our ambition is clear: to grow beyond Ontario and deliver meaningful, measurable change across Canada.

And in a moment of national recognition, I'm thrilled to share that **Lotus STEMM was awarded the prestigious Cascade Award** in the \$50,000 to \$250,000 category for excellence in Science Communication. This is a tremendous validation of the work we do to amplify South Asian voices in science, not just within our communities, but across academic, public, and policy platforms.

As we look to the future, our focus remains on finalizing our strategic plan, continuing the WAGE grant deliverables, and expanding our programmatic reach across provinces. There are challenges ahead—as there always are—but we are not alone. We have each other, and we have a growing network of allies, partners, and champions who believe in our mission.

I want to express my deepest appreciation to **Dr. Roopali Chaudhary**, our Founder and CEO, whose vision, passion, and determination continue to guide us forward. And to my fellow board members—**Pooja, Zainab, Mubassira, Gauri, Arshdeep, Puneet, and Krishana**—thank you for your trust, your contributions, and your commitment to the cause.

As I reflect on all that we've accomplished together, I also share this with a sense of personal transition. This marks the **conclusion of my four-year term on the Board of Directors**, a role that has deeply shaped me both personally and professionally. While I will no longer serve on the board, my

commitment to Lotus STEMM is unwavering. I look forward to continuing as an active member of this incredible community, supporting the organization in identifying allies, exploring new avenues for impact, and holding space for accountability to the transformative work being done.

This year has also been one of immense personal challenge. After undergoing surgery that left me immobilized, I am still relearning what it means to quite literally stand on two feet again. In moments of frustration, pain, and uncertainty, what sustained me was the unshakable strength and solidarity of this community. The resilience, purpose, and passion that flow through the connections I made during my journey with Lotus STEMM gave me a reason to keep showing up, even when it felt hard. This community didn't just lift the organization -it lifted me.

In Lotus STEMM, I found more than a mission. I found a family of fierce, brilliant, compassionate individuals who remind me that when we stand together—even when some of us cannot stand alone—we are powerful beyond measure.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for the honor of serving as your Chair. Here's to the future we're building—stronger, together.

Thank you for being part of this movement.

With gratitude and hope,

Vidya Chamundeswari Narasimhan

Chair, Board of Directors

Lotus STEMM – 2025

Treasurer's statement

Good day to all our mentees, mentors, volunteers, collaborators, sponsors, board members, and stakeholders. My name is Pooja Shree, and it has been my privilege to serve as Treasurer and board member for Lotus STEMM for the year 2023 and 2024.

I am pleased to present the report on the organization's financial standing since our last Annual General Meeting in September 2024. The last fiscal year was marked by significant growth in both revenues and expenditures as Lotus STEMM expanded its programs and staffing capacity. This report provides a comparison to the prior fiscal year (2023–2024) and outlines key highlights in revenue, expenses, and staffing

Revenue

This year, LS generated \$34,161 in total revenue from non-government sources, 68% up from \$20,307.86 in FY2024. This included ScienceUpFirst (SUF) science translations and agreements as well as SUF community grant.

Grants from the initiative SUF, and sponsorship for the annual Degrees of Success conference and Canadian Association of Science Centres. LS also received government grants worth **\$117,855**, primarily from the Women and Gender Equity (WAGE) program.

The total revenue including all the revenue sources amounted to **\$152,095.62**.

Expenses

The increased funds this year have enabled us to cover our ongoing operational expenses, which include:

- Labor and payroll for our old and new employees
- Dues and subscriptions
- Legal and professional fees
- Office expenses

In addition, these financial resources have allowed us to invest in new initiatives, including:

- Subcontractor support
- Speaker honorariums
- Other operational costs essential for growth and sustainability

The total expenditure this year was \$165,201.02 (vs. \$53,917.01 in FY2024), reflecting program expansion and new staffing. Primarily, expenses in payroll & wages were the largest, amounting to \$103,673.56, as LS supported 10 employees under various funding streams. These included 4 under Canada Summer Jobs, 3 under WAGE Project, 2 under the SUF funding, and 1 permanent staff (Treasurer/Executive function). Other expenses included legal & professional fees related to project and compliance, supplies, travel, honorariums.

This staffing allowed Lotus STEMM to strengthen programming, outreach, and organizational infrastructure.

Treasurer's statement

Conclusion

FY2025 was a year of significant expansion, with increased grant funding enabling the hiring of additional staff and scaling of programs. While expenditures grew sharply—particularly in payroll and professional fees—the organization maintained stability and positioned itself for future growth. Continued focus on diversifying revenue streams, managing expenses, and building reserves will be important priorities going into FY2026.

Strategic Priorities Moving Forward

As Lotus STEMM continues its growth journey, our priority is to maintain stability while building on the momentum achieved this year. We will continue to strengthen our organizational foundation, refining our strategies, and restructuring our Board and staffing to better align with our mission. We have also placed a strong emphasis on securing grants and funding opportunities as well as to hire trained staff. All this will help us to create a more sustainable workforce and reinforce our operational capacity—positioning the organization for long-term impact.

Closing Remarks

Lotus STEMM remains, at its heart, a volunteer-driven organization. We take great pride in the dedication, service, and connections built through the efforts of our volunteers. Over the past year, I have seen many of us navigate personal and professional challenges, as well as moments of grief—yet we came together to create meaningful work and lasting memories. Shout out to Roopali, Vidya, Bhavana, Arshdeep, and others that I had the privilege to know, work with and learn from. You are all powerhouses!

As I conclude my term, I carry with me deep inspiration from the commitment, resilience, and passion I have witnessed among my colleagues. I am confident that my successor will carry this momentum forward with equal dedication, continuing to make Canada a better place for South Asian women, one step at a time.

Thank you all for the invaluable work you do and the impact you create every day!



Pooja Shree Mishra, PhD

Treasurer's Financial Statement



Statement of Activity

Lotus STEMM

April 1, 2024-March 31, 2025

DISTRIBUTION ACCOUNT	TOTAL
Income	
Membership Dues	160.00
Non-Government Grants	12,500.00
Refunds-Allowances	-199.47
Sales	16,625.60
Sponsorship	5,075.00
Total for Income	\$34,161.13
Cost of Goods Sold	
Gross Profit	\$34,161.13
Expenses	
Bank charges	6.80
Dues and Subscriptions	362.22
Legal and professional fees	51,899.86
Meals and entertainment	1,232.98
Office expenses	
Payroll Expenses	\$12,687.18
Wages	90,986.38
Total for Payroll Expenses	\$103,673.56
Payroll processing fee	318.00
QuickBooks Payments Fees	
Rent or lease payments	93.81
Speaker Honorariums	801.25
Supplies	3,986.29
Travel	2,826.25
Total for Expenses	\$165,201.02
Other Income	
Government Grants	0
Women and Gender Equity	117,855.00
Total for Government Grants	\$117,855.00
Interest earned	79.49
Total for Other Income	\$117,934.49
Other Expenses	
Profit	-\$13,105.40

Accountant's Financial Statement

As at March 31,	2025 \$	2024 \$
Assets		
Current		
Cash	5,466	35,430
Sales taxes recoverable	874	-
Total assets	6,340	35,430
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Liabilities		
Current		
Accounts payable	5,620	-
Accrued liabilities	-	1,200
Sales taxes payable	-	3,979
Deferred grant revenue	-	16,425
Total liabilities	5,620	21,604
Net assets		
Unrestricted	720	13,826
Total liabilities and net assets	6,340	35,430

Accountant's Financial Statement

LOTUS STEMM

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

(Unaudited – see Compilation Engagement Report)

For the year ended March 31,

2025
\$

2024
\$

Revenue

Grants	130,355	20,641
Service revenues	16,426	11,894
Sponsorships	5,075	6,250
Membership dues	160	160
Interest	79	18
Donations	-	181
Total revenue	152,095	39,144

Program expenses

Payroll	(103,992)	(44,952)
Program supplies and stationery	(3,986)	(2,180)
Travel	(2,826)	-
Speaker honoraria	(801)	(2,458)
Rent	(94)	(645)
Subcontractors	-	(600)
Total program expenses	(111,699)	(50,835)

Other operating expenses

Legal and professional fees	(51,900)	(1,300)
Meals and entertainment	(1,233)	-
Office expenses	(362)	(1,725)
Bank Charges	(7)	-
Total other operating expenses	(53,502)	(3,025)

Excess of revenues over expenses	(13,106)	(14,716)
---	-----------------	-----------------

HR Dashboard

September 2024 - September 2025

4

SUMMER JOBS

5

CONTRACT
EMPLOYEES

1

PERMANENT
(PRO-BONO)
POSITION

2

EXTERNAL PAID
PARTNESHIPS

10

VOLUNTEER
LEADERS

Lotus STEMM is happy to celebrate volunteers and employees who have been integral for the success that we have shared together.

About Lotus STEMM



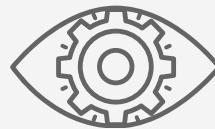
Lotus STEMM is a grassroots federally-registered non-profit organization established in 2018

MISSION



Provide a networking & leadership platform for South Asian women & non-binary folks in STEMM

VISION



Have an intersectional cultural lens for greater representation of South Asian women in STEMM

COMMITMENTS



- (1) Outreach
- (2) Representation
- (3) Research

Our Impact

Lotus STEMM's impactful annual conferences in the past have empowered students, fueled their STEMM passion, and created lasting community impact

Through *hands-on activities, engaging presentations, dynamic guest speakers, and diverse participation*, we've transformed students' lives.



Outreach

Engaged 1000 + in hands-on activities at schools, conferences, & cultural events in last 2 years



Networking

3 global programs run annually to help bridge cultural and STEM barriers



Research

Ongoing 3-year research project on systemic change. Trained 9+ research students who have entered professional schools.

OUR PROGRAMS

The Lotus STEMM team continues to make an impact on the community all year-round. We offer various types of outlets for the South-Asian women of all ages to connect from not just within Canada but across the globe. Click on images to view our programs.



LOTUS STEMM MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Promoting South Asian women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math & Medicine.

www.lotusstemm.org

Programs Offered

1 Outreach

- LS-CAGIS community chapter
- Degrees of Success conference (families, teacher, students)
- Gairdner Lectures - Networking Lunch
- Community and school workshops

2 Networking

- STEMM Mentorship Program (16+)
- Multilingual Multicultural Science Communication Workshops
- Science Translations
- Paksh - A mental health initiative for academics
- Networking

3 Research

- Breaking Barriers Research Project - understand how S.A. women can be supported in their STEMM careers.
- Develop skills in research and scientific methodology
- Conference presentations

Degrees of Success



November,
2024



Erin Meadows
Community Center

About

Degrees of Success



IMMERSE YOURSELF IN A TRANSFORMATIVE
EXPERIENCE OF KNOWLEDGE, GROWTH, AND ENDLESS
POSSIBILITIES



**Empowering the
Next Generation of
South Asian Women
in STEMM**

1



Inspiring young South-Asian girls, aged 9 years and above, and their families in STEMM studies.

**Fostering Inclusion
Through Education
and Family
Engagement**

2



Promoting accessibility, youth involvement, and providing resources for parents and teachers.

**Hands-On
Learning That
Solves Real-World
Problems**

3



Join us for interactive STEMM-related activities addressing real-world problems.



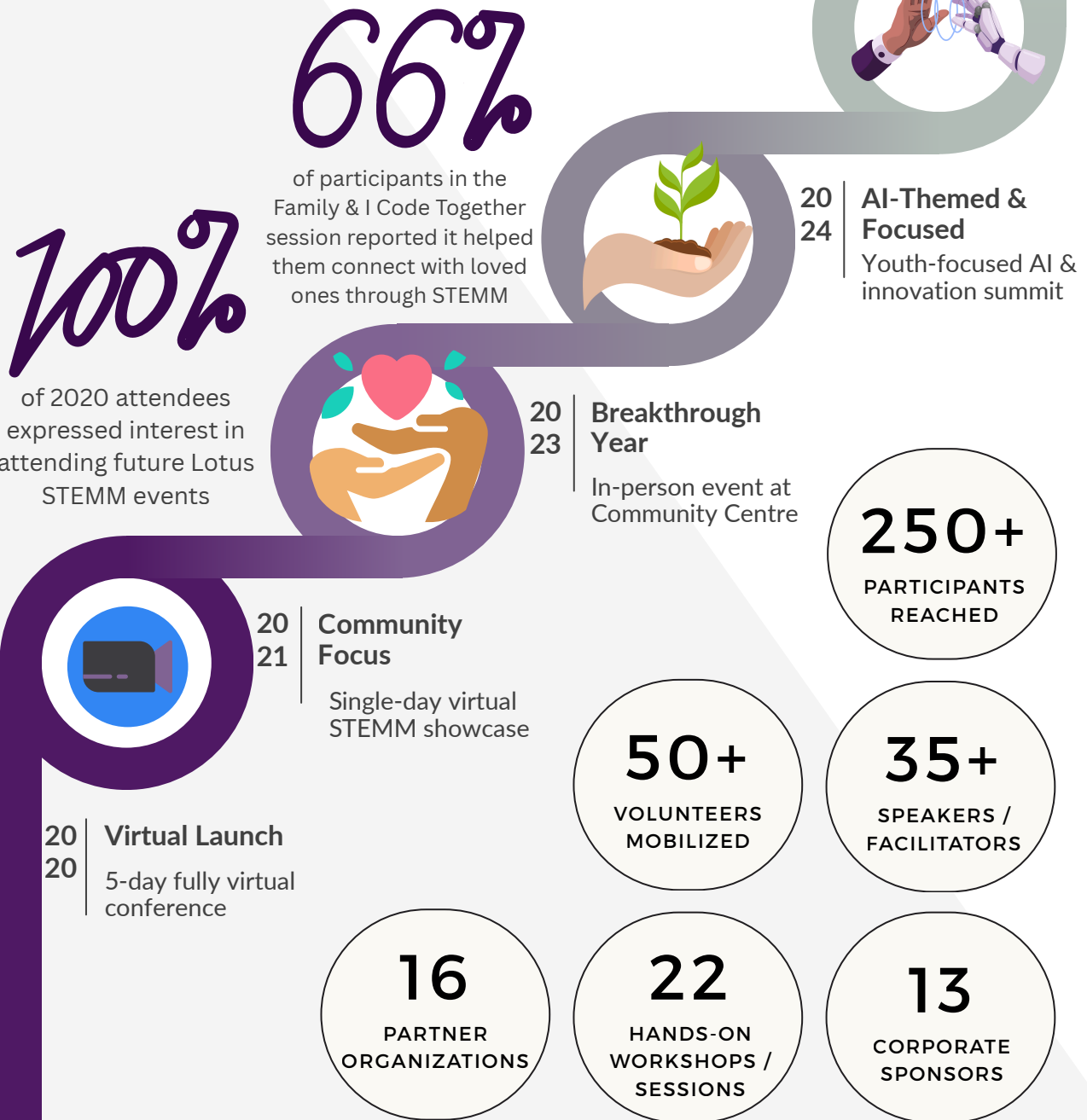
Be a part of our 5th annual
Degrees of Success
conference on

November 2025!



4 CONFERENCES.

COUNTLESS STORIES.
LASTING IMPACT.



2024

Speakers



Oorja Dorkar is a master's student at the McMaster Automotive Resource Center (MARC) under the supervision of Dr. Ali Emadi. She holds a B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering from the National Institute of Technology, Surat, India, and has professional experience as an Assistant Manager at Bajaj Auto Limited, India. Her research focuses on control systems modeling, connected vehicles, and battery management systems. Currently, she is collaborating with Stellantis on traction inverter and thermal management system design.

OORJA DORKAR



Kavita Kamath has been a dedicated mentor for a high school FIRST Robotics team since 2011. She also founded three FIRST LEGO League teams with a total of 24 members, including an all-girls team. Through her mentorship, Kavita demonstrates how essential business skills complement STEMM, empowering youth to apply these skills not only to secure team sponsors but also to craft compelling university applications, apply for scholarships, and develop business plans to pitch their engineering ideas.

KAVITA KAMATH

2024

Speakers



Zainib Nazir is a graduate student pursuing an MSc in eHealth at McMaster University, entering the technology field with a strong focus on health equity, innovation, and co-design. Currently working at a digital health non-profit, her graduate thesis explores a pilot digital population health project that supports complex patients with chronic conditions using a combination of primary care data, robotic process automation, AI, and social drivers of health.

ZAINIB NAZIR



Anagha Hamsala, inspired by her grandparents in India and rooted in her Telugu heritage, is an IB student with a strong commitment to becoming a doctor, aspiring to impact lives on a global scale. As a published author on the ECNE Journal of Neurology, she collaborated with Georgetown University's Neuroscience Department on groundbreaking research regarding closed-loop neuro-computational interfaces. Anagha's work spans neuroscience and neuroethics, blending personal experiences with cutting-edge science.

ANAGHA HAMSALA

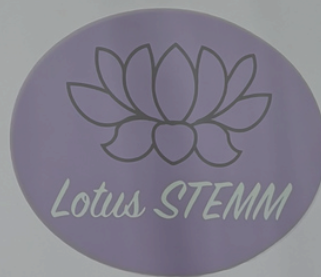
STEM Outreach



March, 2025



Save Max Sports
Centre, Brampton



Networking and leadership platform
for South Asian women in Science,
Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
and Medicine (STEMM)

Teach &
Mentorship

Networking &
Leadership

Research
experience

lotusstemm.org

Support us:



STEM Outreach



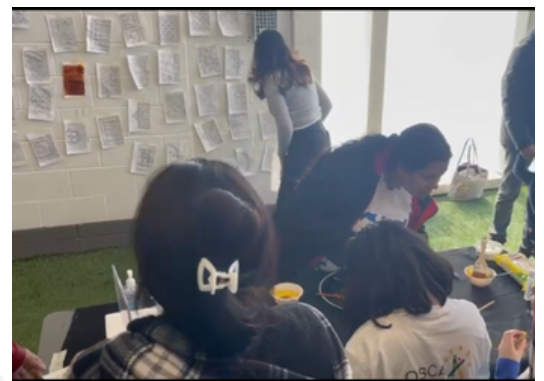
March, 2025



Save Max Sports Centre,
Brampton

Lotus STEMM continues to work with the community to provide culturally-informed STEM outreach to youth. Partnering with the **Ontario Schools Cricket Association (OSCA)**, Lotus STEMM provided a turmeric based acid base activity to **100+ youth** in Brampton.

The event led to several youth amazed at the acids and bases available in their kitchens and households. At the end, youth used their learning to colour in henna inspired drawings, in celebration of Ramadan and Holi.



In collaboration with:



Women and Girls in Science



February, 2025



Malton Youth Hub, Mississauga



Women & Girls in Science



February, 2025



Malton Youth Hub, Mississauga

To celebrate the **International Day of Women and Girls in Science**, Lotus STEMM co-hosts the *Women and Girls in Science: Empowering the Future* event in collaboration with Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS).

The panel featured **Manjot Dhamrait**, **Dr. Shilpa Shenoy**, and **Kritika A.**, who shared personal insights into their STEMM journeys, challenges, and successes. Moderated by **Shivani Railowal**, the discussion emphasized mentorship, representation, and career pathways for young women in science. Attendees engaged in Q&A sessions and networking, fostering connections between students and professionals.

The event led to several attendees expressing interest in mentorship opportunities and future STEMM workshops hosted by Lotus STEMM.



Panelist speakers Manjot Dhamrait, Shilpa Shenoy, and Kritika A., moderated by Shivani Railowal.

In collaboration with:



In addition, to celebrate the **International Day of Women and Girls in Science**, Lotus STEMM runs an annual online campaign celebrating nominated South Asian women in STEMM globally!

Paksh



April-July,
2025



Virtual - Global

Paksh - Mental Health Support Group



April - July,
2025



Virtual - Global

PAKSH, an initiative under Lotus STEMM, was created as a peer support network focused on the **mental well-being of international academics (graduate students and postdoctoral researchers)**. The aim of the program is to provide a safe, confidential, and non-judgmental space where participants can openly discuss the unique mental health challenges faced in academia.

Over the course of the most recent 4-month cycle, **six deeply relevant and thought-provoking sessions** were conducted:

- **Everyone Has Mental Health:** Focused on normalizing conversations around mental health and breaking the stigma, especially in academic spaces.
- **Being Marginalized in Academia:** A critical dialogue on the experiences of underrepresented minorities and the compounding challenges of systemic exclusion.
- **Quantity Over Quality?:** Explored the toxic culture of long hours and hyper-productivity in academia, questioning sustainability and personal cost.
- **Anxiety in Academia:** Participants shared personal coping strategies and learned ways to manage stress and performance pressure.
- **Toxic Lab Environments:** Addressed the realities of harmful power dynamics and created a space to collectively explore actionable solutions.
- **Burnout and ways to cope:** Our guest speaker, Dr. Suramya Agrawal, conducted an interactive session about how our conditioning impacts our performance at work, pushing us to burnout. She gave us practical insights into handling anxiety and spoke about the importance of being exploratory vs. being result-oriented, as a way to approach work.

Paksh - Mental Health Support Group



April - July,
2025



Virtual - Global

Each PAKSH session **fostered a safe, confidential space** where participants shared personal experiences, reflected on struggles, and supported one another through peer validation and empowerment. While not therapy, the program provided much-needed emotional support rooted in trust and solidarity. **Its strengths include strict confidentiality through a registration process, inclusive participation from diverse international backgrounds, and a community-centered approach that promotes empathy and connection.**

In a field where isolation is common especially for international and marginalized scholars; PAKSH fills a vital gap, aligning with Lotus STEMM's mission to support underrepresented voices in STEMM. Positive participant feedback underscores the need for continued support and potential expansion. **PAKSH is more than a mental health initiative; it is a step toward cultural change in academia.**

"You guys are so wonderful being my safe space. I feel so light after each session."

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIAL

Award-Winning

Multilingual Science Communication



2024



Virtual + In-person

3

YEARS

MULTIPLE TOPICS.

CULTURALLY INFORMED.

SCIENTIFICALLY ACCURATE

140+

TRANSLATED
SCIENTIFIC POSTS

7

LANGUAGES (HINDI, URDU,
PASHTO DOMINATED)

12+

TRANSLATORS (2 EMPLOYEES,
10+ VOLUNTEERS)

Together Against Misinformation



November,
2024



PCHS Locations

Funding from the Canadian Association of Science Centres (CASC) was highly useful and impactful for Lotus STEMM to be able to work in the community, partnering with Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS) Seniors program and international students. With the microgrant, LS developed and conducted **2 successful events focusing on finding culturally relevant cardiovascular health information, and combating misinformation and loneliness.** Presented in **Hindi/Punjabi/Urdu** for audience, we also developed evaluation and feedback translated appropriately, and developed methodology to provide the options for audio evolution collection. Furthermore, we were able to support a small business with the purchase of food for wrap-around support for the participants.

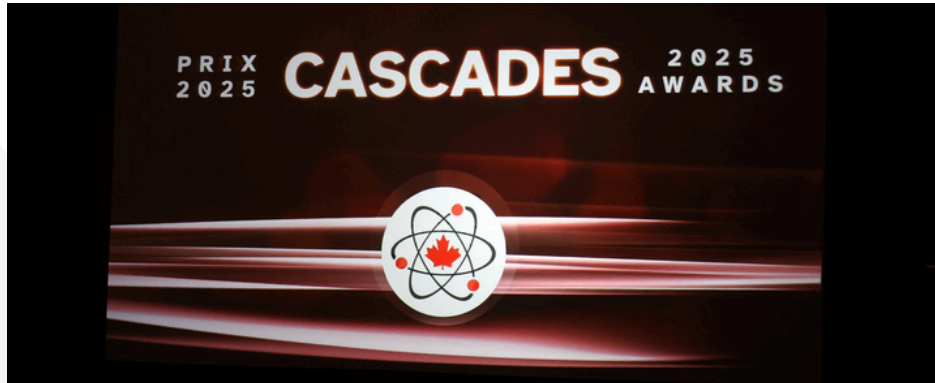


In collaboration with:



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCIENCE CENTRES
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES CENTRES DE SCIENCES





Lotus STEMM received a **2025 CASCADE Award from the Canadian Association of Science Centres (CASC)** at its annual conference on June 12 in St. John's, Newfoundland. The organization won in Category 3, which recognizes projects with budgets ranging from \$50,000 to \$250,000, for its **outstanding contribution to multilingual and multicultural science communication.**

The CASCADE Award selection process involved a juried review by the CASC Board of Directors, who evaluated nominations based on innovation, accessibility, and impact in science communication. Lotus STEMM's submission was supported by multiple letters from academic and community leaders, highlighting its culturally responsive programming and multilingual outreach.

During the award ceremony, CASC CEO Dr. Marianne Mader remarked, ***"Lotus STEMM exemplifies what inclusive science engagement looks like—bridging communities and creating space for voices that have long been underrepresented."*** Following the win, Lotus STEMM was featured in the CASC June 2025 newsletter, which praised the organization's leadership in equity-focused science outreach.



Dr. Chaudhary Awarded King Charles III's Coronation Medal

Dr. Roopali Chaudhary, Founder and CEO of Lotus STEMM, was awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal by the Royal Canadian Institute for Science (RCIScience). This national honour recognizes Canadians who have made significant contributions to science communication, public engagement, and inclusive STEMM outreach.

The selection process was juried and merit-based, with RCIScience reviewing nominations that demonstrated sustained impact and innovation in science engagement. Recipients were chosen for fostering inclusive communities and combating misinformation in STEMM, aligning with the medal's broader mission to celebrate those building a more equitable Canada.



Dr. Roopali Chaudhary holding the King Charles III's Coronation Medal.



"Working on Lotus STEMM is HARD, but I am proud of it! Very very proud of what Lotus STEMM is known and stands for. I am proud that many who have come through it, interacted with it and are currently part of it have found a "home", a network, a group that feels authentic and safe where they can be vulnerable."

A photograph of two women in a professional setting, smiling and high-fiving each other. The woman on the left is wearing a white shirt, and the woman on the right is wearing a green shirt and glasses. They are sitting at a table with papers and a laptop. The background shows a modern office interior with large windows.

Breaking Barriers Building Opportunities



February, 2025



Alberta | British Columbia | Ontario
Canada

Breaking Barriers & Building Opportunities

Breaking Barriers is Lotus STEMM'S **largest and more impactful ongoing project started in 2024**. A 3-year research initiative funded by **Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) Systemic Change Project fund**, and in partnership with **Campfire Kinship Storytelling Inc.**, investigates the systemic, cultural, and institutional barriers faced by South Asian women in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine). A systemic change project for South Asian (SA) women in STEMM across Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia.



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



 **34%** experience **discrimination**

South Asian women in STEM report experiencing discrimination in their workplaces.

 **>50%** feel **underutilized**

Despite being one of the **most educated demographics** in Canada.

"This is more than a research project; it's a call to action for change. By sharing your story, you're helping shape a future where South Asian women can thrive in STEMM."

Dr. Roopali Chaudhary
Founder and CEO of Lotus STEMM



Breaking Barriers & Building Opportunities

We are **partnering with Campfire Kinship**.

Gayathri Shukla founded Campfire Kinship Storytelling Inc. to support organizations with their people and culture strategy. Leveraging the power of narrative, they offer a suite of services designed to turn values into action, such as strategic consulting, experiential workshops, keynote Speaking, and publishing.



She is a multi-talented, people-focused leader, Gayathri excels at empowering teams to celebrate their diversity, and hone their inclusive leadership skills. Complementing her 17 years of experience in the energy and mining sector, Gayathri is a Belonging strategist specializing in innovative methods of storytelling to help people uncover their authentic strengths, and build empathy.



Prior to founding her company, Campfire Kinship, Gayathri led digital transformation programs in mining using human-centered design - a topic she researched during her Executive MBA, and skillfully implemented with her team.

Gayathri is also an inspiring keynote speaker, podcast host of Hearth 2 Heart at Calgary's FM radio station 90.9, co-creator of video storytelling project Unlikely Friends, and a previous Fellow at Public Policy Forum. She served on the Board of CIWA, as the Chair of its Finance Committee. The role she has learned the most from is being a mom to two kids!

News coverage in TV Omni News



OMNI News is the multilingual news division of OMNI Television, Canada's only multicultural broadcaster. It delivers daily newscasts in over six languages—including Punjabi, Mandarin, and Italian- serving diverse communities with culturally relevant coverage.

OMNI champions diversity through locally produced programming and stories that spotlight underrepresented voices and issues.



Senior Program Coordinator, Anjali Barak, and CEO and Founder, Dr. Roopali Chaudhary, sat down with **Radhika Sharma** at **Omni News** to discuss the goals and importance of our study launch: **Breaking Barriers**.

Key highlights of the interview are mentions of the disparity between number of women in STEM fields and the jobs provided for them. The struggles of international students and new immigrants finding jobs was also discussed. They spoke with grace in Hindi and English to promote more South Asian women to participate in the survey for the Breaking Barriers initiative.

Heart 2 Heart Podcast

Hosted by familiar Gayathri Shukla, creator of Campfire Kinship, Dr. Chaudhary and her dive into the layered experiences of South Asian women in STEM.

What does it mean to belong when you're constantly navigating the weight of cultural expectations, professional ambition, and personal identity?

In this episode of Heart 2 Heart, Gayathri Shukla and Dr. Roopali Chaudhary engage in a deeply personal conversation about the intersectional struggles that South Asian women face in STEM. From unspoken **family pressures** to the **invisible load** of being the "only" in a boardroom, they explore how **identity** shapes our choices and outcomes. They also further unpack the concept of "**meta-reflexivity**" - a promising early finding from their WAGE-funded project, Breaking Barriers, to advance systemic solutions for equity in STEM.

Press Release

We share the project overview and answer FAQ's of **Breaking Barriers & Building Opportunities with Campfire Kinship**.

Find the full document here:



Women 10x Global Summit 2025



June, 2025



Hyatt Regency, Calgary

The 10x Women's Global Summit is an international gathering focused on advancing gender equity in the energy sector through systemic change and global collaboration. Hosted by Women10x and governed by organizations like WPC Energy, iSAW, and LEWAS, the summit brings together industry leaders, academics, and change agents to co-create strategies that address workplace barriers and talent shortages.

This year the theme was *Global Journeys: Workforce Transformation in Energy*. Discussions addressed gender equity, talent shortages, and the need for diverse solutions in the energy sector.

Lotus STEMM contributed to the summit through both sponsorship and outreach. **Dr. Monika Stolar**, on behalf of **Lotus STEMM**, co-hosted an interactive workshop, **"Science Behind Bias: Navigating Through Complex Organizations,"** alongside Dr. Carlos Davidovich (TEDx speaker) and iSAW.

The session explored how unconscious bias operates in professional settings, combining lived experience and neuroscience to drive meaningful reflection and discussion.



Gayathri Shukla presents Breaking Barriers project at the Global Summit 2025.



Heidi-Lynne Balasch presents her knowledge and insights into driving gender equity in energy.



Gayathri Shukla reconnecting with former Suncor colleagues Alisha O'Neill, Tammy Arseneau, Lauren Savoie, Natalia D, and Nancy Penner.

Vancouver Startup Week

May 23, 2025 📍 Bentall Penthouse, Vancouver

Lotus STEMM **hosted** its **first-ever panel event in BC**, *“Breaking Barriers: Building Opportunities; Understanding Challenges for Immigrant South Asian Women in Tech & Entrepreneurship”*.

Moderated by **Dr. Vidya Chamundeswari Narasimhan**, a biomaterials scientist, STEMM advocate, and Lotus STEMM Board Director, the discussion centered on the lived experiences, challenges, and successes of South Asian immigrant women in the tech and entrepreneurship sectors. The panel featured:

- **Madhini Vigneswaran, EIT** – Data Analyst, community builder, and co-founder of global impact initiatives, who brought insight rooted in resilience and a global perspective.
- **Ankita Goyal, RCIC-IRB** – A powerful force in immigration law, founder of Immigracia, and an unwavering advocate for access, clarity, and empowerment for immigrants across the globe.
- **Anna Mathew** – Tech visionary, creative entrepreneur, and marketing strategist, who is shaping the future with design, automation, and AI, and breaking every stereotype along the way.



From left to right: Gauri Oak, Dr Vidya Chamundeswari Narasimhan, Madhini Vigneswaran, Ankita Goyal, Anna Mathew, Akshita Puri and Yazhini Baskaran.



From left to right: Dr Vidya Chamundeswari Narasimhan, Madhini Vigneswaran, Ankita Goyal, Anna Mathew.



From left to right: our moderator Dr. Vidya Chamundeswari Narasimhan and speakers Anna Mathew, Ankita Goyal, and Madhini Vigneswaran.

#BoldFutures by South Asian Women's Collective



March, 2025



Toronto, Ontario



Lotus STEMM participated in the **Bold Futures** event hosted by the **South Asian Women's Collective (SAWC)** and **First Work**. Team member **Anjali Barak** spoke alongside **Dr. Golnaz Golnaraghi**, **Tehreem F** from **Fora: Network for Change**, and SAWC leaders **Herleen Kaur Arora** and **Almeera K.**

The panel explored a range of barriers that South Asian women face, from workforce discrimination to cultural expectations that stifle ambition.



Our 3 key takeaways

1. We need **intersectional insights** to drive systemic change, not temporary solutions.
2. **Fix systems, not women.** Marginalized communities shouldn't have to adapt to broken structures; we need institutional accountability.
3. **Collaboration is key.** Events like Bold Futures remind us that progress thrives when organizations unite to amplify voices.



Panelists Anjali Barak, Tehreem F, and Dr. Golnaz Golnaraghi. Moderated by Almeera K.

#BoldFutures by South Asian Women's Collective



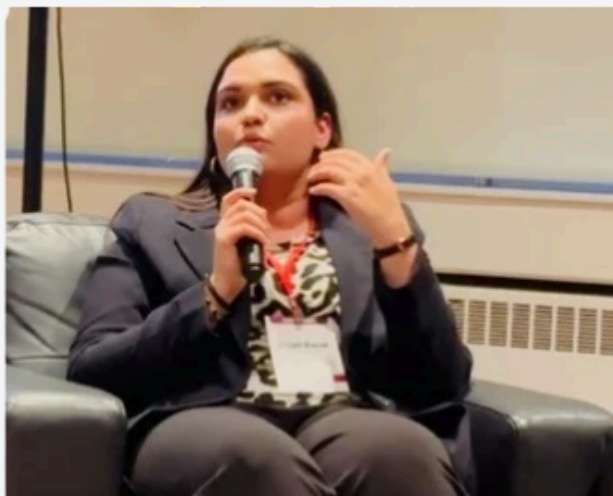
March, 2025



Toronto, Ontario



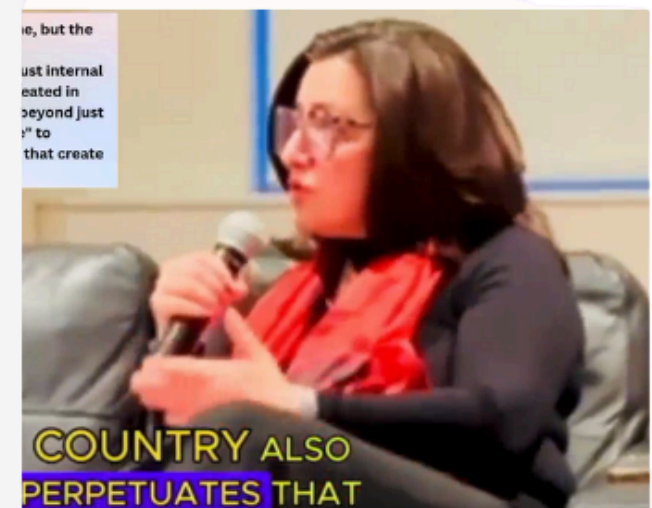
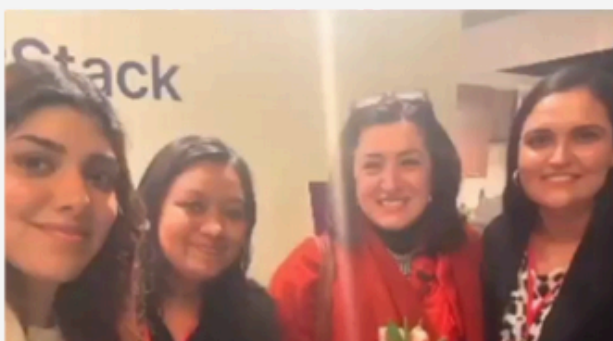
BOLD FUTURES AGENDA	
5:30 PM	Welcome, Registration & Networking
6:00 PM	Welcome Greetings Akosua Alagaratnam, Executive Director, First Work
6:05 PM	Key Note Address Linda Nazareth, Economist, Futurist, & Expert on the Future of Work
6:30 - 6:40 PM	Community Action Research Project Presentation Herleen Arora, Co-Founder & Managing Director, South Asian Women's Collective
6:40 - 7:30 PM	Panel Discussion Moderator Almeera Khalid, Research Manager, South Asian Women's Collective Panelist Anjali Barak, Senior Program Coordinator, Lotus STEMM Panelist Dr. Golnaz Goinaraghi, Founder of Divvy Group & Accelerate Her Future Panelist Tehreem Fatima, Advocacy Manager, Ford Network for Change



Bold Futures Event Toronto

Conversations surrounding Breaking Barriers for South Asian Women in STEMM

Why aren't we seeing them in Leadership Roles?



Women Empowered (WE) Social Event



March, 2025



Mississauga, Ontario

The Women Empowered (WE) Social Event is a quarterly or annual gathering where women come together to network, share stories, and support personal growth. It often features interactive discussions, networking, coaching programs like TransformHer, and storytelling that celebrate resilience and inspire transformation.

Lotus STEMM members Anjali Barak, Bhavya Abbi, **Hibah Jelani**, **Jershika Evelyne J.**, **Waniya Jelani**, and **Yashmi Madaan** were honoured to participate in the Women Empowered (WE) Social Event with our booth.

Special thank you to the Mayor of Brampton, **Patrick Brown**, for speaking at the event!

A few **reflections from the day**:

- **Community fuels progress**: The energy of women rallying together to uplift one another is unmatched.
- **Visibility is vital**: Representation in STEMM isn't just a "nice-to-have"—it's a necessity for inspiring future generations.
- **Action starts with data**: Every conversation at our booth underscored the urgency of our Breaking Barriers survey- to turn anecdotes into actionable insights.



Geoconvention 2025



May, 2025

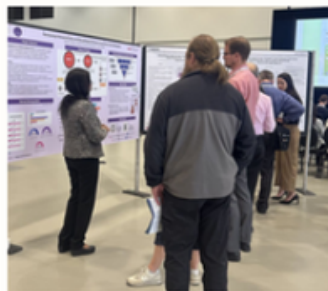


Calgary TELUS Convention Centre

GeoConvention 2025 is a premier geoscience conference held in Calgary that brings together professionals from geology, geophysics, and energy sectors to explore innovations in resource development and environmental stewardship. The event features technical sessions, poster presentations, and an Energy Innovation Pavilion, spotlighting cutting-edge research and technologies driving the future of energy.

Gayathri Shukla presented a poster and presentation titled *Harnessing Intersectionality and Storytelling to Enhance Inclusivity in the Workplace*, which included findings from our **Breaking Barriers** project. She shared emerging data and told the story of “Anika”—a composite persona based on real stories from South Asian women in STEMM.

She covered how typical DEI interventions are not working, and suggested updates to the systems to develop a curriculum and free resources for industry and community leaders. For example, many initiatives educate people to be aware and act. Our *Breaking Barriers* project is working with a promising new insight called meta-reflexivity, which is about building the capacity to reflect before responding.



Gayathri Shukla representing Campfire Kinship, a partner organization, to represent the Breaking Barriers project at the Geoconvention 2025

Team Testimonials



Sanzida Shams

“As a Research Analyst at Lotus STEMM, being part of the Breaking Barriers project has been both professionally rewarding and personally significant. This project addresses critical issues that have often been overlooked or underrepresented for generations—particularly the structural, cultural, and economic challenges faced by South Asian women in STEMM fields.

It’s been incredibly empowering to contribute to work that centers the lived experiences of our community and provides evidence-based insights into the barriers and opportunities that shape our journeys. I’m especially proud to see how the data we’ve collected and analyzed is not only informing our annual report, but also helping to build a more inclusive and equitable future in STEMM. I feel truly fortunate to be part of this initiative and to witness the impact of our collective efforts in amplifying voices that have long gone unheard.”

Sanzida Shams



Bhavya Abbi

“Being part of the Breaking Barriers project has been one of the most meaningful professional and personal experiences I’ve had to date. My experience as a researcher deepened my understanding not just of structural barriers, but of the quiet forms of resilience, and redefinition that often go unnoticed. Translating these lived experiences into insight-driven tools has made me feel like our work is not just reflective, but actionable.

What’s stayed with me most is the emotional weight of the data: the trust the community has placed in us, and the responsibility that comes with holding their stories. I’m especially grateful to Anjali and Roopali for their extraordinary leadership, whose guidance has made this work feel deeply meaningful and supported. It’s been an honour to be part of a team that values curiosity, collaboration, and a deep commitment to systemic change.”

Bhavya Abbi

Team Testimonials



Gayathri Shukla

"As a researcher and curriculum developer, I feel incredibly privileged that Campfire Kinship has had the opportunity to partner with LotusSTEMM through the Breaking Barriers WAGE project. This project has not only deepened my understanding of the barriers faced by South Asian women in STEM, but also shown me what true community-based partnership looks like.

Our team culture is grounded in generosity, humility, and positive camaraderie. Everyone is genuinely committed to learning with and from each other, while staying rooted in a shared mission that's nurtured by Roopali's thoughtful and visionary leadership. What's most inspiring is how this work translates into real, tangible impact for and with our community. In a world that can often feel heavy, Lotus STEM is truly a beam of light."

Gayathri Shukla, Founder, Campfire Kinship



Rida Abboud

"Our time as developmental evaluators has been incredibly insightful and generative, allowing us to collaboratively learn alongside this dedicated team as they navigate complex adaptive challenges in developing their vital, culturally relevant tools and resources. We are particularly thrilled to engage with the emergent strategy, ensuring that our evaluative contributions are responsive and embedded within the ongoing design and implementation process.

It's inspiring to witness the team's commitment to community-led solutions, deeply aligning with feminist principles in evaluation by prioritizing equity, participation, and social justice. We look forward to continuing this dynamic partnership, supporting the co-creation of impactful resources."

*Rida Abboud and Caroline Claussen,
Developmental Evaluators at Lotus STEM*



Caroline Claussen

Team Testimonials



"The Breaking Barrier project is an inspiring initiative for South Asian women of all ages, highlighting the need to overcome cultural, societal, and community expectations that create barriers in South Asian women's STEMM careers. Creating a Halfway Mark poster was a memorable experience and a meaningful way to give back to my community and promote encouragement!

I've had the opportunity to connect with young women like myself who are dedicated to addressing challenges faced by South Asian women globally, from cultural and societal inequities to the lack of recognition for women's contributions in STEMM.

Lotus STEMM has a fantastic team and compassionate members, allowing young South Asian women like myself to pursue STEMM careers, break social barriers, and work towards a society that values equity and inclusivity of women in STEMM."

Sarubia S



Anjali Barak

Being part of the Breaking Barriers project has been a profoundly transformative experience for me, both professionally and personally. I've learned that project coordination is not just about managing tasks- it's about holding relationships with care, listening deeply, and making sure every voice feels seen and valued. The trust our community partners have placed in us is both humbling and motivating, reminding me that this work carries a responsibility beyond ourselves.

I am grateful to Roopali's visionary leadership and to our team's spirit of generosity and curiosity. Together, we've built more than a project- we've nurtured a movement grounded in hope, accountability, and the belief that change is not only possible, but already unfolding. It's an honour to be part of this journey.

Anjali Barak

Participant Testimonials

"Lotus STEM is the first initiative I've encountered that specifically supports South Asian women. It acknowledges the unique cultural barriers we face, barriers that often go unaddressed when women are treated as a monolith. Programs like this are essential for mentorship and community-building."

"I first heard about Lotus STEM through a university newsletter. Being part of Accelerate Her Future, I recognized Lotus STEM as a meaningful initiative spotlighting representation and recognition for South Asian women across science and engineering fields."

"Discovering Lotus STEM was empowering. It allowed me to connect with others who share similar challenges and triumphs. It's a powerful reminder that we are not alone in our journeys."

Preliminary Survey Results



2025



Ontario, Alberta, BC



+17

jobs & volunteer
positions



60-100

people per
conference



20

people per
panel event



+190

Survey
Participants



50

Focus Group
Participants



British Columbia

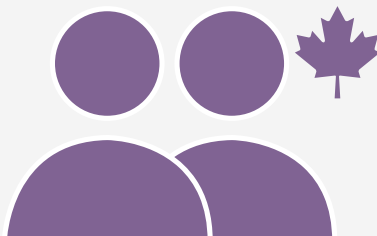
British Columbia: 14 (11.9%)

Alberta: 34 (28.8%)

Ontario: 61 (51.7%)

*A silhouette of the map of Canada is shown. The red pins represent our survey participant outreach in provinces across Canada.

Canadian-born to
South Asian parents: **37** (31.4%)



Immigrated to
Canada: **81** (68.6%)



Preliminary Survey Results



2025



Ontario, Alberta, BC

Indian 60 (74.1%)

Pakistani 7 (8.6%)

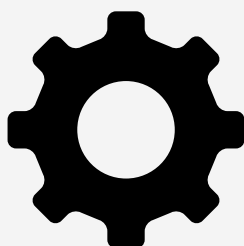
Bangladeshi 6 (7.4%)

Other (Sri Lankan, Caribbean, Mixed) (10.0%)



Distribution of South Asian Heritage of all Breaking Barriers project participants.

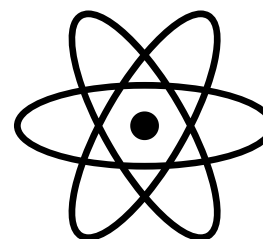
Engineering: 32 (27.1%)



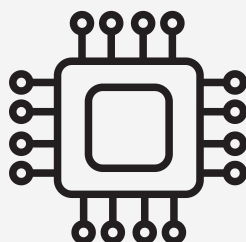
Medicine/Healthcare: 26 (22.0%)



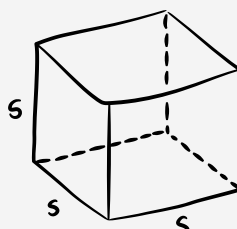
Science (Chemistry, Physics, Biology): 25 (21.2%)



Technology: 22 (18.6%)



Mathematics (Finance, Accounting): 5 (4.2%)



$$V = s^3$$

Other allied fields: 8 (6.8%)



Distribution of STEMM fields of all Breaking Barriers project participants.

Breaking Barriers **Next Steps**



Next Steps

What's next?

Looking ahead, we will start to transition from research to developing a **curriculum** and **free resources** to equip parents, educators, employers and community leaders to apply this skill in real-world scenarios. We will also be launching 9 customized workshops, **co-designed** with input from our survey and focus group **participants**.

Workshop Focus

Each workshop will **address** a different **key barrier** identified in our research, such as:

- Navigating cultural stigma in STEMM
- Addressing institutional discrimination
- Building leadership skills
- Enhancing mental health supports in academia
- Creating pathways to entrepreneurship

Target Audiences

- Parents of South Asian girls, women, and gender-diverse individuals in high school, post-secondary education, and early-career stages.
- Educators, employers, and community leaders committed to equity in STEMM.



IN THE MEDIA

Lotus STEMM has been featured on a number of conferences and panel discussions.

OMNI Punjabi

- Media interview about “Breaking Barriers” interviewing Dr Chaudhary, and Anjali Barak.

Community participation (in-person booths)

- Address at “Girls in STEAM” Program at the Markham Public Library
- Address for Parent Council STEM Event at Erin Centre Middle School
- Ontario Schools Cricket Association (OSCA) - CricketED Symposium 2025
- South Asian and Tamil Women Collective - #BoldFutures

Lotus STEMM thanks Partners & Sponsors 2024-2025



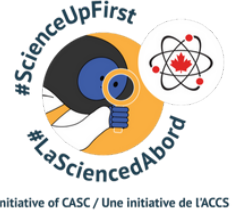
Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada

Funded by the
Government of Canada

Canada

Canada
Summer Jobs



An initiative of CASC / Une initiative de l'ACCS

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCIENCE CENTRES
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES CENTRES DE SCIENCES



Allarta Life Science



IMOGEN COE CONSULTING




~4255

Social media followers (1587 X, 1187
Instagram, 193 Facebook, 95 YouTube,
1478 LinkedIn, 650+ direct engagement).

