

How to Make a Better Future

IWF BC ANNOUNCES ITS FIRST TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP CANDIDATE



The International Women's Forum of British Columbia (IWF BC) is thrilled to announce that the Afghan humanitarian and athlete, Friba Rezayee, will be our inaugural candidate for the 2023/24 cohort of the IWF Women's Leadership Fellows Program.

One of the very first Afghan women to compete in the Olympics, in the sport of judo, Friba is the founder of Women Leaders of Tomorrow (womenleaders.ca) a Canadian-based non-profit organization that has been a lifeline to Afghan women and girls.

Friba emigrated to Canada in 2011 where she attained her BA in political science at UBC. She founded WLOT not long after, to help promote and sustain the empowering sport of judo for young women in Afghanistan, establishing clubs (now closed by the Taliban) around the country. She also created a remote mentorship program, matching Afghan female students with mentors in Canada and the UK, to learn English, following an accredited curriculum. This has become increasingly challenging since the 2021 ban on education for girls and women, but the program continues and can now boast 45 graduates.

Over the past 3 years Friba has advocated and lobbied for the release of women at risk in Afghanistan, including her former judo team members, speaking to major media throughout North America and before Canada's House of Commons. Thanks to her ingenuity and dedication, she has recently secured both secondary and university scholarships in British Columbia—one of the only avenues of emigration allowed by the current Afghan government—for 12 young Afghan women.

WLOT is a volunteer run organization with members and a board of directors based in Canada and Afghanistan. Needless to say, it is operated at considerable risk to its Afghan members. While they receive no government funding, in 2022 they raised enough funds to support ten Afghan women to enroll in UBC's Masters Program in the areas of mining, engineering and geology.

We believe that Friba has the potential to fulfill her goal to effect positive change in a new Afghanistan. The IWF Women's Leadership Fellows Program—with customized sessions at INSEAD and Harvard, a personal mentor, and the opportunity to access the experience and

wisdom of hundreds of accomplished women— would go a long way in preparing her with not just the tools and networks towards achieving that goal, but most importantly, the self-belief and confidence to reach for those goals.

“Friba is an inspiring leader, who is making an incredible difference in the advancement of girls and women in physical activity, sport, and recreation. Her work with the BC Judo community, Women Leaders of Tomorrow, and her advocacy of gender equity impacting the global community and empowering young women around the world.”

Erin Wilkins
Department Chair Recreation Studies, Langara College

“The IWF Fellows Program is an amazing opportunity for our forum to help support, develop, and inspire a woman through educational leadership-including providing the mentee with a mentor for at least a year. I have mentored a Fellow and found it incredibly rewarding for me as well.”

Diane McCurdy
Member of IWF BC and Founder of McCurdy Financial

*“Leadership is a light that shines most brightly under extreme circumstances...not when life is easy, but when it is a matter of life and death. And it is demonstrated when that person lifts those around them because they know that the world will be better as a result.”
I cannot think of a more deserving leader to be nominated as IWF BC’s inaugural candidate for the Fellows Program.”*

Catherine Roome
Member of IWF BC and Co-Founder of Pulse Technologies

You can help by donating towards the cost of the Fellowship. The total cost of the Fellowship and travel expenses is \$53,000. To date, a third of the funds have been raised.

For corporate outreach - All donations will be gratefully acknowledged and recognized. For more details, please contact caralyn@iwfbc.com.

For IWF members- IWF BC will match up to \$15,000 for all donations made by members. To donate, please contact accounting@iwfbc.com.



Patra de Silva
President, IWF BC