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<https://www.womenleaders.ca> / Email: media@womenleaders.ca

Women Leaders of Tomorrow (WLOT), a Vancouver, British Columbia based non-profit society focused on the mission of education for women from Afghanistan, is pleased to welcome four bright and talented Afghan scholars to the Vancouver and Victoria area for the 2024-2025 school year.

The four recently arrived students will complete their high school studies with full scholarships at:

(2) Crofton House School, Vancouver BC (<https://www.croftonhouse.ca>)

(1) Shawnigan Lake School, Shawnigan Lake BC (<https://www.shawnigan.ca>)

(1) St. Margaret's School, Victoria BC (<https://www.stmarg.ca>)



Recently arrived students Bahara, Hela, Lina and Maria in late August 2024 meeting with the cohort of three 2024 high school graduates and university undergraduate scholarship recipients.

WLOT also joyously celebrates the successful 2024 high school graduation and successful university undergraduate scholarship placements for its first cohort of three high school scholars.

As has been extensively reported in the international news media recently, the situation for women and girls in Afghanistan remains dire and is getting worse every month. With all high schools and forms of higher education for women shut down by Taliban edict throughout the country, the Taliban has recently imposed even more strict so-called “laws” upon the population of the country. Women are now banned from showing their faces in public, speaking, or singing. Every woman must now be accompanied by a male family member when travelling outside of the home. Defying these edicts implementing the Taliban’s gender apartheid risks flogging, imprisonment or worse.

Women Leaders of Tomorrow’s mission is to provide the educational opportunities for young women from Afghanistan that are now completely banned in their home country. Through our partnerships with generous donors, educational institutions and volunteers throughout Canada and the United States, we work to educate the next generation of young women to take up important roles in business, science, government and law.



Tahira Khalili

Tahira has received a full scholarship for undergraduate studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Starting in the 2024-2025 school year Tahira plans to study biology, health sciences and other prerequisite courses prior to applying to medical school.

In her own words: "It's June, and all the graduation ceremonies are happening. I can't believe how fast time has passed. When I close my eyes, I still feel like I'm in Pakistan, waiting for my visa to get approved. But when I open my calendar and see all the dates for my graduation, grade dinner dance, tea party, and other celebrations, it feels real. This makes me reflect on my journey and thank all the lovely people who made this journey possible: the Crofton House community and Women Leaders of Tomorrow.

It's unbelievable that I'll soon be a university student. I'll be joining the University of British Columbia with a full scholarship in Science. I know my journey has just begun and I have a long road ahead of me, but I'm grateful that I can dream again and make plans for my future—a right that every human being deserves, including Afghan girls.

These three students are remarkable, brave, and the future of Afghanistan. Their perseverance is inspiring to the world. Their hard work and dedication to education is a testament to the importance of education for girls in Afghanistan.



Marweh Attai

Marweh has received a full scholarship for undergraduate studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Starting in the 2024-2025 school year Marweh plans to study mathematics, physics and electrical engineering.

Marweh, a recipient of the 2022 WLOT high school scholarship program, came to Vancouver to complete their high school education at Crofton House School, one of the premier schools in British Columbia. Their high school journey began in Herat, at the Afghan Turk Maarif school, where they received numerous academic and leadership awards. Marweh developed an interest in robotics and linguistics at a young age, and attending a prestigious school allowed them to delve deeper into these fields. As a member of the school's robotics club and an avid language enthusiast, they participated in various international competitions and secured several student leadership positions.

In August 2021, during grade 11, the government collapse and Taliban occupation of the capitol occurred, leaving Marweh imprisoned in their house after the complete ban on female education. Despite the challenging circumstances, they continued learning English and math online, achieving an 8.5 on the IELTS and scoring in the 99th percentile on the SAT math section when they eventually were able to leave the country.

Marweh made the most of their final years at Crofton. They describe it as a place where they connected with brilliant individuals and found their community. Quickly adapting to Canadian culture, Marweh began volunteering with KidSafe, Rainbow Refugee, and the Vancouver Orphan Kitten

Rescue Association shortly after arriving in Canada. After a year away from school, they successfully secured an internship within UBC's faculty of electrical and computer engineering.

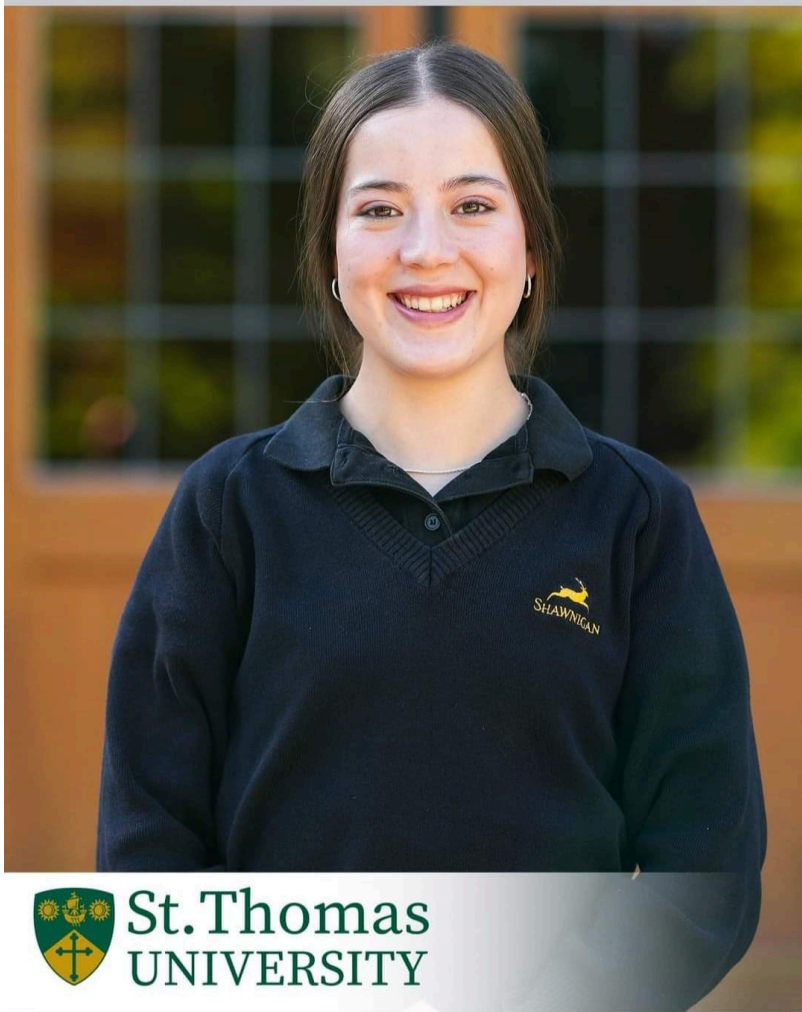
To further expand their knowledge in this field, Marweh applied to the best six engineering schools in Canada and received admission offers from all of them, along with scholarship offers. Ultimately, they accepted UBC's offer and were honoured with the Don Wehrung International Award, recognizing outstanding students from war-torn countries who have achieved academic excellence.

Marweh is eagerly anticipating their journey at UBC. In the fall, they will pursue general engineering with Honors Mathematics, but they are hoping to major in electrical engineering and minor in Persian language studies.

In their words, Marwa says *"I always wanted to continue my education. Even when I was in Afghanistan before the war, I had already started planning where I wanted to go to university and what I wanted to study,"* they explained. *"Even after the war, when I was at home, I was still hoping to continue my education. When I heard about this opportunity I just jumped right into it. I couldn't say no."* Marwa's transition to a new education system presented many challenges. *"It's all a trade-off, you need to trade so many things in your life, and I traded off my family, and my country to come here and do high school."*

The internships they completed at UBC's engineering faculty not only provided them with valuable insights but also helped shape their aspirations for the future. *"Doing those internships, having those connections with people at the engineering faculty, helped me narrow down my path and what I'm going to do next year,"* they said. Looking ahead, Marwa is embarking on the next chapter of their educational journey, studying engineering with honours math at UBC. *"The scholarship I got to UBC is called the Donald Wong Award. Just being at UBC doing engineering as an internal student is a big thing for me. It's something I never even dreamed of, because it was just too big. But it's happening now."*

Furthermore, they say, *"The person that I was two years ago is just so much different from the person I am now. Sometimes I come across an issue and I catch myself having feelings about it that are very different from the feelings I thought that I would have a couple years ago. I've really grown. I'm proud to be a part of this community, just because of how socially aware it is. Even the current state of the world, which is awful, I know people in my grade, my friends who are worried about things and are actually doing things to make it better—I'm just proud of that. I'm proud to see people my age actively working to make change."*



Marina Musleh

Marina has received a full scholarship for undergraduate studies at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Starting in the 2024-2025 school year Marina plans to study liberal arts, law and business.

In her own words: "I am Marina Musleh, a girl from Afghanistan and with the background Hazara ethnic group. I was born and raised in Kabul Afghanistan along with my four siblings. I am the first girl in my family who was lucky enough to attend school in Kabul Afghanistan. My school journey started at Marefat High School, a school that embodied and built the students with resilience and equality. I was in the middle of my 12th-grade final exams and dreaming of going to Kabul University and studying political science. However, in August 2021 the government of Afghanistan fell under the control of the Taliban. In the morning, they took control of Kabul city. I was in school and doing my exam. When I finished my exam I planned to go home and get ready for the next day of my exam. Unfortunately, I saw the shocking moment of my life.

I saw the vehicles of a Taliban full of young Taliban soldiers with guns and rockets. For a moment, I thought it was the end of my life because until a day before they were bombed and killed thousands of innocent people across Afghanistan. Luckily, I managed to get home safely but I will never forget the silence of the night when Kabul fell.

The Taliban stripped the women and girls right away. I was banned from going to school and going outside without my father accompanying me, and all my rights as a human being were taken away

from me. I was forced to stay home. I was desperate for help to continue my education. I searched for many ways to graduate from high school in Afghanistan but it was impossible. Luckily, I had a developed connection with the Women Leader of Tomorrow organisation prior to the coming of the Taliban. I called directly to Friba Rezayee, the executive director of WLOT and asked her to help me to finish high school. I told her about my plans and how I have a dream to become the first female president of Afghanistan.

After a couple of weeks of searching and trying different schools and colleges around the world, she connected me at Shawnigan Lake School. I had my enrollment interview with Mr. Lamont the headmaster and the director of admission of Shawnigan Lake School, on the roof of my house in Kabul on a frozen morning in November.

I sneaked across the border of Pakistan with my important documents hidden in the pocket of a T-shirt that my mom sewed for me under my clothes. I was in Pakistan for 3 months and 10 days to get my student visa. On May 20 2022 I left Pakistan and came to Canada and was very welcomed and accepted to Shawnigan Lake School community.

I have studied for two years at Shawnigan. Finally last week on June 23, 2024 graduated from Shawnigan Lake School with many excellent experiences and opportunities that I never could imagine having in my life. Shawnigan Lake School has had an enormous impact on the direction of my life. I always remember the generous support of Shawnigan and Women Leaders of Tomorrow in my education journey. Now, I am going to one of the best universities in Canada and will empower myself with education and knowledge to fight for human rights, especially for women and children around the world.”