

# Spotlight — Najwa Rahmani

## Who is Najwa Rahmani?

My name is Najwa Rahmani (she/her), and I am a meticulous, systematic, and personable being. My greatest fulfilment comes from my commitment to lifelong learning and passion for education. My commitment and passion have incentivized me to pursue a career at the intersection of adult education, digital technology, and social justice. Currently, I am completing my Master of Education in Interdisciplinary Studies online and part-time at the University of Calgary. The topic for my first year is *Leading and Learning in a Digital Age*. Thus far, I have examined the implications for designing and leading interdisciplinary and technology-enhanced learning experiences in addition to strengthening competencies in technological and digital literacies. I have completed a diploma (Assaulted Women’s/ Children’s Counsellor/Advocate), certificate (Instructing Adults), and four independent Continuing Education courses. As a result, I have been equipped with a robust playbook of techniques and best practices.

I wholeheartedly enjoy eating plant-based foods, travelling, and watching shows and movies. For fun, I manage my adorable cat’s Instagram account!

## How does Khaled Hosseini’s quote, “a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated...” resonate with you?

I am an Uzbek-speaking Turk who immigrated from northern Afghanistan at a young age. My family fled the violence in Afghanistan to pursue a safer and better life as settler immigrants. Education has been a privilege to access and receive that I otherwise could not have had if my family had stayed in Afghanistan.

There is a quote from Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns* that resonates with the value of education that has been instilled in me: “A society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated...” Women and girls cannot wholly and meaningfully participate and contribute to Afghanistan’s social, economic, and political spheres when they cannot access and obtain an education. Additionally, the consequences affect the quality of their lives. These questions reflect this matter:



(1) *How will women and girls access critical health information and services (e.g., reproductive and sexual health)?*

(2) *How will stricter and enforced gender roles and responsibilities harm self-autonomy, freedom of choice, etc.?*

(3) *How will this devaluing and eliminating a right to education further perpetuate patriarchal violence and oppression?*

(4) *Will there be an increase in child marriages because families are desperate to reduce the financial burden? Will there be an increase in spousal and family violence because women and girls are forced to live with abusers?*

These four questions do not capture the entirety of the dangers and harms; however, it begins to illustrate how society has no chance at success if its women are uneducated.

## What is Educational Architect?

Educational Architect offers personalized services and ready-made educational materials that combine adult instruction sensibility and technical skill with an aesthetic sense. We work with consultants to leverage their expertise



to build effective and equitable educational materials (e.g., lessons, courses, webinars, workshops, etc.). Our ready-made educational materials concentrate on our knowledge-based expertise: adult education, social justice, and career development. The materials range from guides to curricula.

**What inspired you to start a venture like Educational Architect?**

My history inspired me to start a venture like Educational Architect. My complete recollection of who I am involves being meticulous and systematic. I adapted to the traditional knowledge-transfer approach in my academic realm by creating visual learning materials for myself. My materials included simplified text, helpful visuals (e.g., diagrams), and colour. It was not until I started my career that I began creating educational materials for others. As I began to advance my education and career, I learned to incorporate adult instruction sensibility into an activity I had been doing for years and years. I kept saying I will do it one day, and almost a year ago, I decided one day could be now.

The path I had identified in my adolescence included pursuing architecture. Life happened, which put me down a different path—pursuing social justice. I know that education will always be a core value, no matter what path I am on. To pay tribute to my adolescent self’s goal, I see myself as an Educational Architect, hence the business’ name.

**How does Educational Architect demonstrate social transformation and innovation? The vision of Educational Architect is “to reform and transform society through education by leveraging consultants’ expertise to dismantle and eradicate violence and injustice to achieve liberation for all.” How do we see this in practice?**

Education is often a site of harm and trauma for individuals (e.g., Residential Schools). Educational Architect is committed to transforming these sites of practice to become more sustainable by stimulating empowerment, well-being, and satisfaction in learners. We build educational materials and experiences that empower and engage learners by valuing their diverse perspectives, strengths, intersectional identities, and agency. Additionally, we build educational material and experiences that challenge traditional hierarchies and power imbalances by prioritizing the needs and well-being of learners.

Furthermore, we work with consultants to leverage their expertise to build effective and equitable educational materials (e.g., lessons, courses, webinars, workshops, etc.). These consultants are engaged in transforming workplaces to become more accessible, inclusive, equitable, and diverse. The support Educational Architect offers contributes to the consultants’ projects to transform workplaces.

**Educational Architect offers many diverse services. How does this lend to English language teaching?**

Educational Architect’s diverse services lend to English language teaching by supporting educators in multiple ways, including:

- *Creating multimedia (such as infographics, animations, etc.) to support learning*
- *Creating interactive activities to support active learning*
- *Creating assessments (note that this does not only mean tests)*
- *Creating content (such as manuals, resources, slides, etc.)*
- *Creating high-quality and effective courses and curricula to meet intended outcomes*
- *Creating high-quality and effective training and workshops*
- *Transforming from passive to active learning*
- *Transforming materials created for one format to another format (e.g., adapting materials from face-to-face to online learning)*
- *Offering training on how to use and integrate various technological tools (e.g., online collaborative platforms, task management systems, educational applications)*
- *Identifying the best technological tool to utilize for the learning environment*

Let’s frame it this way: You are an English language educator who will be facilitating a workshop, and you are overwhelmed with creating or updating your materials (e.g., slides). You can save your time and stress by choosing Educational Architect to design or re-design your materials.

**You designed Trades and Career Planning (TCP). Can you talk more about this?**

As the former Program Manager (and formerly, Program Assistant) for Women Transitioning to Trades and Employment (WTTE), I oversaw the program’s lifecycle, finances, students, and staff. WTTE is a successful and unique



training and employment preparation program for women and gender non-binary, trans, and 2-spirit peoples living on low incomes who face significant barriers to accessing training and employment, particularly in the construction trades. Trades and Career Planning (TCP) is the curriculum for WTTE. The topics and activities included in TCP will give students the exposure to make decisions about the trades (including trade-related positions in the Professional, Administrative, and Technical sectors) or careers they will prepare to enter. TCP includes:

- *Pathways to the Trades*
- *Pathways the Education*
- *Self-exploration (e.g., values, interests, passion, purpose, etc.)*
- *Self-assessments (e.g., SWOT Analysis, 16 Personalities, etc.)*
- *Career and Trades Exploration/Research (e.g., NOC Codes, Labour Market Research, work style, etc.)*
- *Impacts on Employment (e.g., automation, Artificial Intelligence, environment, etc.)*
- *Goal Setting and Action Planning (e.g., SMART and HEART goals)*
- *Job Searching and Networking (e.g., Information Interviews)*
- *Resume and Cover Letter Essentials*
- *Interview Preparation*
- *Personal Development (e.g., habits, decision making, thinking styles, etc.)*

**What are your next steps?**

My short-term goal is to continue building Educational Architect’s website and social media presence in addition to applying for grants to put towards start-up costs (e.g., software and app fees).

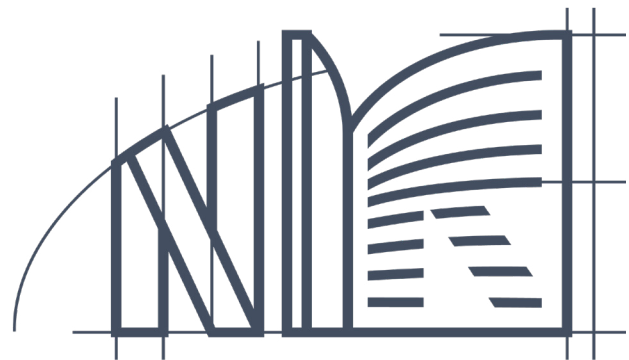
My medium-term goal is to create and add more educational materials. Our ready-made educational materials concentrate on our knowledge-based expertise: adult education, social justice, and career development. Additionally, I would like to build partnerships and collaborate with other educators and subject matter experts to co-create materials.

My long-term goal is for Education Architect to grow with more staff and become a hub for all educational materials related to adult education, instructional design, career development, social justice, and more!

**What is one thing you want others to know about you and your company?**

I approach my work with not only my mind but also with my heart. My heart contains my passion for and commitment to education. My heart also contains the dreams of all the Afghan women and girls who yearn for education. I know I would have been one of them if my family remained in Afghanistan, so I bring my heart to my business. I have promised myself that if and when Educational Architect becomes successful, and I have the financial means, that we will support education initiatives in Afghanistan to educate women and girls.

Moreover, through education, I am learning and unlearning to become more accountable, responsible, and aware. I weave this into Educational Architect.



If you would like to know more, please visit [Educational Architect](https://www.educationalarchitect.ca). To get in contact, Najwa can be reached at [najwa@educationalarchitect.ca](mailto:najwa@educationalarchitect.ca).

Thank you once again, Najwa—Congratulations on this exciting new venture!

