

ACM Canadian Celebration of Women in Computing (CAN-CWiC) 2022



CAN-CWiC 2022 was held on the 21st and 22nd of October 2022, at Delta Hotels by Marriott, Toronto. This was the first in-person CAN-CWiC event after the pandemic, and I was fortunate to get the opportunity to join the large gathering of female-identifying students, professionals and faculty (along with allies), sponsored by WiCS SFU. This was my first time travelling to the city of Toronto and I thoroughly enjoyed the beautiful city and the fall colours on full display.

Friday, October 21st

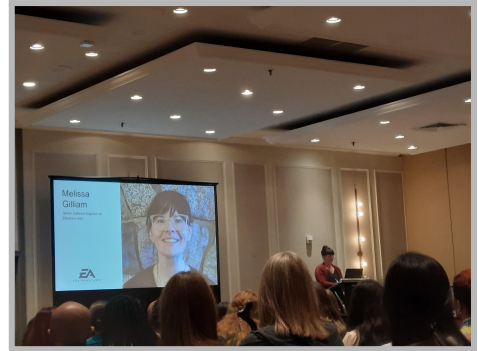
I had an early morning flight from Vancouver to Toronto. Starting at 6 pm, we had the opportunity to network and get pictures from the photo booth. The dinner started at 6.30 pm when Prof. Wendy Powley, the founder of CAN-CWiC (formerly ON-CWiC) and main organizer of the 2022 event, welcomed us and briefed us on the history and aim of CWiC events. We were pleasantly surprised to hear that there are more than 500 women in attendance with 33% of students studying in a graduate program and 29 students travelling from BC.

We enjoyed a lovely four-course dinner, after which Maram Assi, Chair of the Student Advisory Committee of CS-CAN, gave an overview of the organization and the plans for the next CWiC event. Finally, the keynote for the day was delivered by Morgan Klein-MacNeil, VP of Finance Technology at TD. It was an inspiring talk where she talked about her experience with imposter syndrome and taking on challenges in order to change.

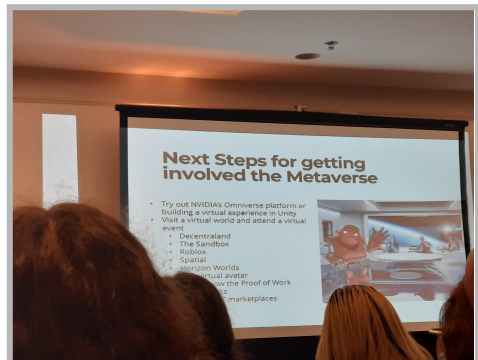
Saturday, October 22nd

Day two of CAN-CWiC started with the presentation of [NCWIT Aspirations in Computing National Award Presentation](#) where high-school students were recognized for their outstanding work in technology.

The second keynote was delivered by Melissa Gilliam, Senior Software Engineer, Electronic Arts. It was a thought-provoking speech about career paths, saying yes to things that scare you, the art of asking questions, following curiosity and building connections. A few messages that stood out personally for me are: Figure out your values and non-negotiables when planning your career; Trust the judgement of others who believe in you; Be okay with not knowing things (in the context of leading larger teams and asking questions) and finally the famous quote by Maya Angelou, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”



Next, I had the chance to present my research on Neural Inertial Navigation at student lightning talks and got positive feedback and interesting questions. The second session I attended was by Emily Wilson, Senior Solution Architect at IBM, where she introduced Metaverse and presented a great summary of all the technologies involved. During lunch, we had the chance to network and attend the careers fair. The third session was named “Finding I in Science”, led by two grad students from the University of Toronto, where we had a round table discussion of what science is, who defines science, and the ethics and the philosophy of science broadly. The final session I choose was about Tech interviews conducted by Fatima Taj, Software Engineer at Yelp, where she discussed the interview process from start to end, including applications, behavioural and technical interviews and salary negotiations.



The last session was a panel discussion with panellists from industry and academia, where they shared their experiences and views on starting a career in tech, obstacles they faced and overcame throughout their career, mistakes and lessons learnt. It was the perfect end to two days where all of us came out with new-found motivation, inspiration, and a sense of community.



CS organizations/ Diversity initiatives I learnt about:

[CS-CAN /Info-CAN](#)

[AI helps Ukraine](#) - Charity conference to raise funds in support of Ukraine

[The National Center for Women & Information Technology \(NCWIT\)](#)