

ANNUAL REPORT 2011



FCJ Refugee Centre

A Project of the Sisters, Faithful Companions of Jesus



FCJ Refugee Centre has been walking with uprooted people for 20 years. Throughout this time we have been serving refugees and other uprooted people at risk due to their immigration status, and welcoming anyone asking for advice, counsel and support regarding these issues.

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Special thanks to all of our donors, volunteers, students, residents and clients who accompanied us through these 20 years.

Message from the Co-Directors

"Traveller, there is no road; the road is made by walking."

-Antonio Machado, Campos de Castilla

In many ways this quote epitomizes the struggles we've faced over the past 20 years in walking with uprooted people. Looking back at our history in Canada we see both a nation that has been a haven of tolerance and freedom for vulnerable populations from around the globe, and one that has severely limited the options for people to integrate and regularize their situation. Through the years our supporters, staff, clients and volunteers have demonstrated extreme resilience in their efforts to champion the rights and protection of refugees – even when confronted with barriers stemming from policy changes, transformations to the immigration and refugee system, and general intolerance of newcomer populations. Following these trends, 2011 was no different.

The majority of cases that we received in our office this year were non-status individuals or those with some form of precarious status – many of whom had entered Canada undetected. This can be linked to the persistence of refugee claims receiving a negative decision from the IRB. As a result there was a sharp increase in the number of Humanitarian and Compassionate applications completed at our office. Further trends that defined 2011 for us were more non-status youth in need of assistance, the confirmation of human-trafficking as a relevant issue in Canada, and the reduction of services for immigrants and refugees resulting from the CIC cuts to the settlement sector (most hard-felt in Toronto).

Our efforts to counter the growing phenomenon of human-trafficking were noteworthy over the year. Staff and volunteers participated in various networks across the country to create a more unified model of response to better serve victims and survivors of this crime. Our office continues to take multiple cases linked to human-trafficking and we are steady on our path to respond to this growing trend.

We are on the cusp of the collapse of the immigration and refugee system in Canada as we know it – which is profoundly impacting the sector and the vulnerable populations we serve. We fear that this "turn back the clock" reform means that Canada will become a nation that ignores equality before the law, due process, our international treaty obligations, and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and treats newcomers as simply resources to be exhausted and discarded. As we prepare to weather this imminent storm we have tethered ourselves to our core values and will to stand up for equality, justice and fairness in Canada's immigration and refugee policies, to benefit Canadians and newcomers alike.



Marking our 20th anniversary, FCJ Refugee Centre honoured Judy Broadbent, of The Maytree Foundation, for her many years of dedication.

"We are what we are because people started asking for that": Co-directors

FCJ Refugee Centre started with one bedroom and after 20 years, the Centre expanded to 4 houses where we can accommodate up to 30 women. Later on people started to request legal assistance, so the FCJ Refugee Centre started to provide legal assistance. Through this program the organization is able to accompany people in the refugee process or any other immigration process (sponsorship, Humanitarian and Compassionate application, etc). Then again people started coming because they didn't know how to fill the forms and they were calling us for our expertise so we decided to implement the program that is called POPULAR EDUCATION and we started to provide workshops. Every year we deliver approximately 100 workshops, and train 2,000 people per year.

20 YEARS ANNIVERSARY



The celebrations for our 20th Anniversary continued and culminated in our Gala Dinner on Thursday 17th November 2011. The Lithuanian Hall on Bloor Street West was transformed through multi-coloured table cloths, flags and simple yet effective table decorations.

Refugee Forum: The Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the future of refugees in Canada

Through the Street Party on June 11 FCJ Refugee Centre celebrated the voices of uprooted people. The participants at the Street Party enjoyed performers from around the world, children's activities and cultural foods prepared by our residents.

The family event helped to build partnerships with the diverse community actors and provide support for our various projects and initiatives. It also commemorated and recognized the continual support from volunteers, community actors and recurring sponsors and partners.



On Tuesday, October 25, 2011, FCJ Refugee Centre and The Salvation Army Immigrant and Refugee Services co-hosted a day-long forum at Harbour Light Ministries. This forum provided the opportunity to engage in in-depth discussions about upcoming changes to the Canadian refugee law with the implementation of Bill C-11, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act.

More activities : Street Party



Garage Sale

Donors and volunteers held two successful Garage Sales through 2011. Both activities yielded a grand total of about \$1,000.00, which went toward the FCJ Refugee Centre projects.

There were kitchen items, shoes, sewing machines, decorations, bed linens, clothing, and other household items. As usual, the jewellery tables were popular with the original designs of the FCJ ladies and the pieces donated by well-wishers.



SETTLEMENT PROGRAM

Understanding each other



Workshops

Understanding Each Other is one of the workshops we offered through 2011. The women learned how to build a relationship of trust and confidence amongst all the residents as well as with FCJ staff members.

Through our integrated model of Refugee Settlement we have supported 18 women and 6 children from different parts of the world in our houses. Some of the countries the women are from are Zimbabwe, Congo, St. Vincent, Eritrea, El Salvador, Mexico, and Afghanistan.

stan. Palwasha Wajdi was the coordinator of the program during 2011. She welcomed each one of our residents and offered support to them in their process of integration. We have successful stories of women who have gained status in Canada, through our

combined effort in providing all resources related to the immigration process. So far this year 9 women were accepted as Permanent Residents of Canada.



Another successful workshop was held for women who are victims of violence, giving them basic awareness about Mental and Physical health.

Sharing experiences

During summer 2011, the resident women, their children and the female staff and volunteers went on a two-day camping trip. It was a great opportunity for women to explore Canada through a different view other than everyday life in the city. The trip provided not only our residents, but volunteers and staff,



Celebrating togetherness with nature

with a safe space to enjoy outdoor life and activities... rich in the novelty of a first time canoe trip, seated around a campfire, sharing songs from different parts of the world, basking in our differences and commonalities at the same time.

Relaxing while canoeing



Building Opportunities

Monica, Luida, Martha, Ana and Carmen are some of the members of the group of women that came to the FCJ Refugee Centre every Thursday and, guided by Lida (the volunteer teacher), they produced sets of necklaces, earrings and brace-

lets. The craft group had the opportunity to sell their handwork during different events at the FCJ Refugee Centre and through other activities outside the Centre. Some of events are the street party, garage sales and conferences. Just at the CCR Consultation more than 50 sets were sold and the group made about \$200.

Volunteer Counsellor: Wendy Beales

"I started as a volunteer counsellor here at FCJ in September 2011 and come to the centre one evening a week for approximately two hours. Between September and December, I worked with three individuals, two of whom I worked with over several weeks, while the other individual attended for two session. In my prac-

tice, I use a client-centred and strength based approach, utilizing a variety of counselling frameworks (CBT, Brief Solution-Focused Therapy and Narrative Therapy). More importantly, however, my philosophy is rooted in an anti-racism, anti-oppressive framework and coming to FCJ has contributed greatly to my own learning in this respect. The eclectic and vast systemic supports available at the centre along with the warm, committed volunteers and staff have led to me feeling part of both a community as well as a movement- the centre's passion in 'walking with uprooted people' is contagious! Some of the issues individuals have brought to our sessions have included previous trauma and violence, challenges to adjusting to change, anxiety related to the refugee process as well as struggles with mood, etc."



Beautiful jewellery



Patricia Echeverria joined the FCJ team through the past year. She was at the front desk helping clients over the phone.

Legal orientation

We assist uprooted people independently of their status in Canada. The Centre received around 10,000 phone calls at the end of 2011 and assisted more than 1,000 drop in clients (besides the scheduled appointments).

This program involves inland activities related to case work at every step of the refugee determination process or any other immigration process. From information-gathering delegations to other

countries, to collaborations with local NGOs, all activities are geared toward greater access and equity. We have seen a growth in the rejection of refugee claims, mostly from Mexico and Colombia, as well as cases from El Salvador, Haiti, Guatemala, Afghanistan, St. Vincent, Jamaica, Honduras, etc. Due to the influx of refugee claim rejections, Judicial Reviews have risen. Yohanna Blanco did an excellent job supporting clients with their immigration process.



Pro-bono, placement students and volunteers

As a volunteer at FCJ Refugee Center I have had the opportunity to learn a tremendous amount about the Canadian refugee determination and immigration systems. Working on specific cases with staff members, other volunteers, students and the clients themselves, I have been able to gain a very practical understanding of the different processes and the implications for the people involved. Learning from, and being supported by, the other people in the Centre has created an ideally positive working environment. Moreover, having been given the opportunity to work on a number of differing projects and help with events has given me a larger understanding of the importance of the organization in a broader social justice context.

As a student at York University studying migration issues, volunteering at FCJ Refugee Center has allowed me to relate the theoretical knowledge I gain as a student to the lived experiences I am presented with as a volunteer. I am very grateful for the opportunity to apply what I learned to real situations and feel as though I was contributing more directly and practically.

Volunteers and students summer 2011



mainly on Wednesdays. Since January 2011 we have assisted more than 200 clients. We helped them with translation of documents and interpretation through applications to Ontario Works, Legal Aid, medical etc.

ESL Group

We revised the ESL program with the generous contribution of trained English teachers who volunteered their time. The program ran through the fall and was intended to increase access to language classes for people who were facing barriers for different reasons. With the support of the teachers, we were able to offer three levels of classes four days a week. We received a very positive response from the students who participated in the program and decided to keep the program going.



Interpretations and Referrals

Shaun assisting people with interpretation. We provide this service



Number of workshops

2011

Month No.

Jan.	1
Feb.	12
March	7
April	13
May	5
June	14
July	5
August	2
Sep	8
Oct.	3
Nov.	7
Dec.	2

TOTAL 79

Workshops

The Sharing Skills and Resources with the Settlement Community project was successfully implemented across Ontario with the support of the Law Foundation of Ontario. The FCJ Refugee Centre was able to deliver a series of educational workshops to professionals working within the settlement and integration sector. During this two-year program, we managed to deliver a total of 161 workshops. Through this two-year program, more than 5,000 people benefited from the program. Participants were front line workers, teachers, students, refugee claimants, non-status people, etc. The last period of the year FCJ Refugee Centre focused on issues related to policy changes such as Bill C-4 (formerly Bill C-49), refugee reform, and human trafficking. Some agencies showed interest in specific areas of The Balanced Refugee Reform Act like the appeal process to the Refugee Appeal Division, the Assisted Voluntary Return Process, the new interview process, and so on. Another topic of interest is related to the changes to the Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds application.



Coalition of Service Providers

Through 2011 we continued working with 14 partner organizations (members of the Coalition of Service Providers). FCJ Refugee Centre coordinated 4 meetings during this year. One of the new efforts as part of the Coalition is to address the need of refugee

houses to review the barriers refugees face when they enter Canada and how the houses respond to those needs. FCJ Refugee Centre contributed to a section of a book on barriers to settlement: "Unsettled Settlers: Barriers to Integration", edited by Soheila Pashang.

During the last meeting in November 2011 FCJ Refugee Centre had the opportunity to visit Vive La Casa, a refugee Shelter located in Buffalo, that helps refugees coming to Canada from more than 100 countries. During the visit FCJ Refugee Centre participated in an informative session offered to clients where we learned about the necessity of providing information about the Canada refugee system. One of our goals for next year is to provide support through informative sessions to people who are living at Vive la Casa.

Refugee advocate proposes mechanism to clear refugee case backlog

In response to the new refugee law, FCJ Refugee Centre summarized a proposal for the Federal Government to create a mechanism to regularize precarious migrants in Canada – a step described as necessary, due to the current backlog of 60,000 pending refugee claims and 40,000 Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds (H&C) cases now before immigration authorities.



COALITION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

Toronto

Sojourn House
Canadian Red Cross,
Romero House
Matthew House

Hamilton

Micah House

Windsor

Angela Rose House
Matthew House

Fort Erie

Casa El Norte
Matthew House
Chez Marie

Peace Bridge
Newcomers Centre

Kitchener

Welcome Home
Refugee Housing
Community
Mennonite Coalition
for Refugee Support

Peterborough

Casa Maria Refugee
Homes

Anti-Trafficking Training Program

During 2011 FCJ Refugee Centre started to collaborate with various agencies across Ontario to raise awareness about human trafficking. Specifically, the organization has been developing and delivering workshops to help service providers better identify and assist victims and survivors of human trafficking. We've received a lot of positive feedback from these workshops, and anticipate the continuation of this project. Additionally, the project will be expanded to reach a greater audience, develop best practices, and provide more timely and responsive services for these populations. This important work couldn't have been done without the generous support of the Canadian Women's Foundation and our partners, Walk-With-Me, St. Joseph's Women's Health Centre and the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture.



Loly Rico in a training

FCJ Refugee Centre, represented by Loly Rico, was chosen to coordinate a Counter Human Trafficking Capacity Building in Peel Region project undertaken by Sexual Assault Rape Crisis centre of Peel. The main outcome is to develop a Resources and Tools Training Manual for policy makers, front line activists, community organizations assisting victims and survivors of human trafficking. The project is set to launch a sustainable network to counter human trafficking in the region of Peel. The purpose of this network is to enhance the response to the needs of trafficked persons in terms of services and protection.

During the year FCJ Refugee Centre continued to deliver Counter Human Trafficking workshops to service providers across the province of Ontario. FCJ Refugee centre also participated at the preliminary discussions on the launch of the Ontario Human Trafficking Task Force.

Feasibility Study

In 2011 we sought the pro bono services of consultants from Management Advisory Services to help us produce a fund development feasibility report. This was done in an effort to prepare ourselves for long term sustainability in an unstable financial climate. The goal of the study was to determine the Centre's potential to raise money, how long it should take, the best methods and projected costs. We would like to thank Ken Goldberg and

Networking

Politicians, activists, community leaders, etc made visits to the office in order to know more about the work that FCJ Refuge Centre does. We welcomed Andrew Cash, Member of Parliament for the Toronto riding of Davenport, seen here meeting with Varka Kalaydzhieva and Francisco Rico. The meeting was part of the tour that the member of the parliament had at the Centre getting familiar with the work that the Centre does with uprooted people.



FCJ Refugee Centre in the media

Throughout this year FCJ Refugee Centre participated in many interviews by newspapers, TV shows and radio. One of the interviews was given to the Toronto Sun. The journalist Tom Godfrey interviewed Francisco Rico about the Assisted Voluntary Returns as part of the Balanced Refugee Reform Act.

Francisco and Loly regularly give background information to journalists and have appeared in articles in The Toronto Star, and on The Agenda (TVO) and Metro Morning (CBC radio).

Refugee Update

During 2011 we published 3 issues. Some of the topics were Middle East

Revolutions, Power Changes and Refugees, Detention of Immigrants and Refugees, Why should Canada

care about the Roma people, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights condemns Canada's Direct-Back Policy, etc. Refugee Update is available at our website:

http://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/?page_id=12

Fundraising

The FCJ Refugee Centre has maintained its resourcefulness in order to stay afloat amidst ongoing funding cuts to the settlement sector. We've valued strong partnerships through our work to continue to uphold the same quality of service provision and offset the competitiveness that has come from more people needing to vie for a limited pool of funds.

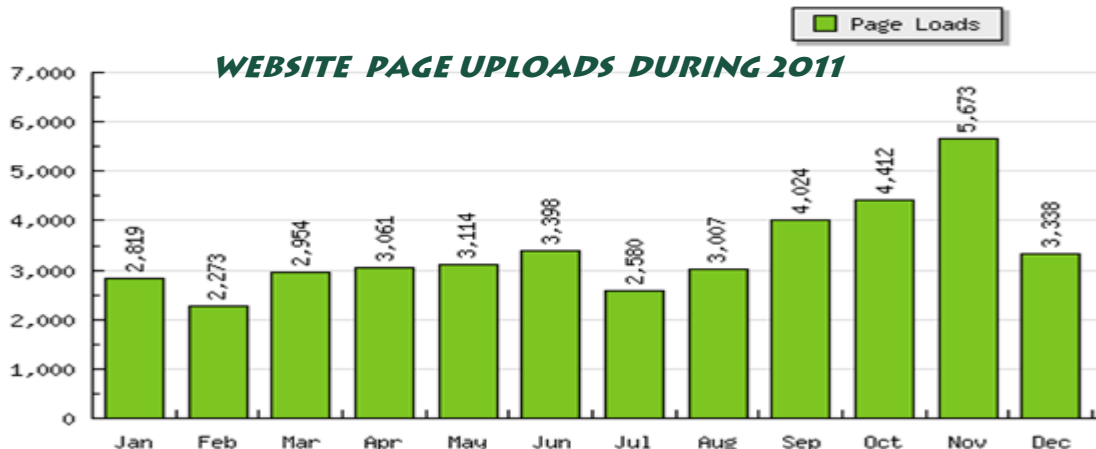
We have expanded our services and programs to serve a greater number of people and meet emerging challenges in the field.

Through this work we have continued to rely on the generosity of individual donors. As a result we launched our monthly donor campaign at the end of the year.

These funds will allow us to provide essential services to immigrants, refugees and newcomers as they navigate the various processes associated with settlement and integration.

We are sincerely grateful to everyone who has supported us in our efforts to walk with uprooted people.

WEBSITE PAGE UPLOADS DURING 2011



The Centre had received excellent feedback from people who had checked the website. One of the main comments is related to the new information they now are able to access through the website. The graphic shows the number of page loads per month during 2011.

FCJ Refugee Centre

Statement of Operations and net assets

Year ended December 31, 2011

	2011	2010
Revenues		
Donations		
Individual donations	\$ 21,404	\$ 2,780
Religious organizations	106,990	94,937
Foundations	138,175	154,795
Corporations	128	11,500
Government grants	73,354	67,374
Rent	61,811	63,726
Other	43,259	14,045
	445,121	409,157
Expenses		
Legal Program	92,466	101,781
Popular Education	75,232	76,032
Settlement program	146,523	146,725
Research and development	27,487	7,993
Administration	93,645	59,972
	435,353	392,503
Excess of revenues over expenses for year	9,768	17,654
Net assets —at beginning of year	18,358	704
Net assets —at end of year	28,126	18,358