

FROM YOUTH TO YOU





FOREWARD >>

This toolkit was born out of a growing need for youth, and particularly newcomer and precarious migrant youth, to feel more valued and included in various services across the City of Toronto. Youth are often met with challenges when attempting to access services and participate in programs in different areas such as: settlement, education, legal, employment, recreation, and the arts, to name a few... Most noticeably, many newcomer and precarious migrant youth are met with a general lack of awareness of their plight, and a lack of sensitivity to how immigration status (or lack thereof) intersects with other present and urgent needs.

Using our own experiences over the last few years as a jumping off point, we have reached out to other newcomer youth and newcomer youth serving organizations to put together a robust toolkit about newcomer youth engagement. The objectives of this toolkit are to promote promising practices and help ensure that newcomer youth are given equitable opportunities to fully participate in Canadian society, and steer their own course through their immigration and settlement processes.

We would like to acknowledge that really understanding youth engagement is a journey, and that we have a lot to learn about this idea – and particularly how it is shaped in the current landscape of newcomer youth services in Canada. As such, we acknowledge that we are by no means experts on this topic, but feel we are well situated to get the discussion going after participating in a youth-led, youth-decided group for the past few years. We would like to think of this toolkit as an organic document, and we welcome your input and ideas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are incredibly grateful for all of the support we received over the course of this project and know that we couldn't have done it without the generosity of the Laidlaw Foundation, our allies and community partners, and of course the FCJ Refugee Centre for allowing us to grow and learn in a space of our own.

By no means is this list exhaustive, but we would like to shout out to the following organizations who have helped us tremendously along the way:

Access Alliance Multicultural and Community Services

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture

The Canadian Council for Refugees' Youth Network

The Canadian Council for Refugees

Equitas

Sojourn House

St. Stephen's Community House

Supporting Our Youth (SOY)

The Toronto Precarious Status Youth Network

VWAT

Youth Without Shelter

Finally, we would like to dedicate this toolkit to the members of the FCJ Youth Network, who have all committed their hearts, energies and minds to building the group over the years, as well as to the thousands of precarious migrant youth living in Canada, who are still looking to find their home.

LAILAW
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KEY TERMS

We would like to begin by defining some key terms that we thought were important for both this toolkit and youth work in general. These definitions are not exhaustive, but they are what we came up with collectively in our group.

Term	Definition
Youth	Anyone who self-identifies as youth
Youth Engagement	We define youth engagement as the meaningful and ongoing inclusion and participation of self-identified youth in the activities of organizations, institutions and the wider society – including program development, program implementation, planning, decision-making and even employment. We strive to offer a flexible, inclusive and accessible environment for youth, where they feel safe, valued and connected. The role of the youth coordinator in this case is to facilitate the guidelines set out by the youth, and coordinate the logistics of the group (communication, providing resources, etc.). This role is shaped organically in response to the needs of the group, and may include advocacy, knowledge sharing, group facilitation and one-on-one support. We recognize the format and organization of this kind of youth group may take up space in a certain way, and as a result we need to make some allowances and accommodations. To do this, we prioritize communication, and underline this work with an anti-racist, anti-oppression approach. We will continue to acknowledge that our youth group spans multiple identities and social locations, and as such our model of youth engagement needs to be flexible and accessible to meet youth where they're at.
Visitor	Usually someone who has been in Canada for less than six months. Often there is an "entry date" marked in your passport that allows you to stay for six months after this date (unless there is an additional exit date stamped in your passport). If you stay longer than this date, and you haven't done anything to change your status, you will be non-status. People with visitor status are unable to work or study.
Refugee Claimant	Someone who is fleeing persecution in their country, and seeking refuge in Canada, and has filed a refugee claim with the Canadian government.

Term	Definition
Convention Refugee	Someone whose refugee claim has been granted by the government after having a hearing with the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). A convention refugee may also be someone who has resettled as a private or government-sponsored refugee.
Refused Refugee Claimant	Someone who has had a negative decision on their refugee claim, they may be eligible to appeal to the IRB or to apply for judicial review to the Federal Court.
International Student	Someone who has applied for and received a permit to study in Canada. This permit allows them to study at an approved school or institution.
Temporary Resident Permit Holder	Someone who has a temporary resident permit (TRP) – a special permit that is given to someone who has precarious status and in unique situations. This permit is usually valid for six months or to one or two years.
Temporary Worker	Someone who has a work permit and a temporary resident visa. This status allows you to work in Canada for a specified period of time. There are many types of temporary worker programs and each carries different sets of guidelines and procedures.
Permanent Resident	Someone who has applied for and received permanent residence in Canada. This allows that person to stay in Canada permanently (with some exceptions).
Non-Status (undocumented)	Someone who doesn't have any of the statuses listed above (and is not a Canadian citizen). Someone in this situation may apply for permanent residence on Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds (called an H&C application). Please note there are some conditions to be eligible to apply for this application.
Discrimination	We think of discrimination as a spectrum that includes: hate, dislike, discomfort, tolerance, acceptance, respect, affirmation, advocacy & alliance. We recognize that discrimination happens in many ways including: exclusion, violence (in all its many forms), (mis)use of language, threats, lack of access, and even silence.
Oppression	The imbalance of power and privilege that extends to many areas of our lives, and plays out in racist, ableist, sexist, transphobic, homophobic, classist, and other discriminatory ways. We recognize that oppression only exists in relation to privilege, and that it can be both individual and systemic.

Term	Definition
Anti-Oppression	The journey of acknowledging and addressing individual, collective and systemic biases, while working to recognize each individual as a wholly unique person. This journey should lead to creating a space where respect, equitable participation and self-determination are encouraged.
LGBTQ+ Positive Space	In the context of the settlement sector, a Positive Space is a welcoming environment where LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, etc.) newcomers are able to access culturally inclusive services with dignity and respect, and where service providers can work free from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Everyone can work to create Positive Spaces by challenging homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and cissexism. ¹
Intersectionality	Intersecting social identities such as age, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, class, social status, immigration status, sexual identity, experiences with authority, violence, etc. shape our individual uniqueness and inform our complicated relationships with power, privilege and oppression. Intersectionality then invites to value and strive to understand the individualism of those around us rather than make assumptions.
Precarious Migrant	Precarious migrants refers to those populations that hold uncertain migration status marked by the absence of elements such as work authorization, the right to remain here permanently, not depending on a third party for one's right to be here, and social citizen rights available to permanent residents and citizens. ²
Ally	A person with particular privileges who is guided by oppressed communities and learns how best to fight oppressions, like able-ism, ageism, audism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, etc. ³

Term	Definition
Tokenism	The practice of making only a symbolic effort towards limited involvement of underrepresented groups in order to give the false appearance of inclusivity. ⁴
Safe Space	A space where (newcomer) youth and allies feel welcome from the moment they arrive, and can feel safe and comfortable with sharing their ideas, stories, and interests. A place where (newcomer) youth do not feel the need to hide part of their multiple identities in fear of being judged or oppressed. We would like to acknowledge that creating a safe space in our community is part of a process that is in constant need of being improved on.

1) The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, **Positive Space Starter Kit – Positive Spaces Initiative**, online at:

<http://www.positivespaces.ca/sites/positivespaces.ca/files/OCASI%20Positive%20Spaces%20Starter%20Kit%202014.pdf>

2) Goldring, Luin, Carolina Berinstein and Judith Bernhard. (2007) “Institutionalizing Precarious Status in Canada.” *Citizenship Studies* 13(3) pp. 239-265.

3) The 519 Community Centre, **The 519’s Equity Glossary of Terms**, online at:

<http://www.cfcollaborative.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/The-519s-Equity-Glossary-of-Terms-Oct-21-11.pdf>

4) The 519 Community Centre, **The 519’s Equity Glossary of Terms**, online at:

<http://www.cfcollaborative.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/The-519s-Equity-Glossary-of-Terms-Oct-21-11.pdf>



YOUTH VOICES



WE reached out to newcomer youth across the GTA to hear what they had to say about youth engagement. Here are some of their answers...

QUESTION 1:

Has anyone ever heard of the term “Youth Engagement”?

- “The youth engagement is where youth come together to do different activities or solve some issues that they have in common.”

QUESTION 2:

Have any of you been part of a youth group before?

- “The first time when I came here, one of my friends who asked me to attend one of the youth groups, and I really enjoyed it because we shared a lot and talked about problems we have as youth.”
- “They gave us advice, and I saw many people changing their lives. They were not in school and they started going to school, and others are working. Their lives have changed since they joined the youth group, and I see that they are proceeding in a good way.”

QUESTION 3:

Outside the youth group do you have projects that you work on or other programs that you are involved in? For example some youth groups have dance programs or guitar lessons.

- “That is true, because not everybody is good at education, you can use your talent and be successful in your life.”
- “Some youth don’t know what they want to do. And by being a part of the kind of programs like the dance program they will find what they are good at.”
- “The activities might help them reveal their potential.”

QUESTION 4:

How is the youth group that you attend structured? Do you meet weekly, what do you do?

- “Only for youth the main activities are in the summer, unless you want to take some English courses.”
- “Activities are only in summer, and it’s very short.”
- “We mostly talk about bullying and social life at school.”
- “I think we are structured in half and half, the youth have part of their own responsibility and the staff have their own responsibility. We meet twice a week, Wednesdays are for youth to decide what to do and Saturdays the staff decide what we do.”

“[THEY] FACILITATE THE RESOURCES FOR A YOUTH PROGRAM
BASED ON THE YOUTH'S NEEDS.

“YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FOR ME IS
ACTUALLY INVOLVING YOUTH IN ALL OR
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PROCESSES THAT COULD AFFECT
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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT MEANS
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Youth
engagement

“IT MEANS YOUTH
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DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES OR
GROUPS SO THAT THEY
WILL FEEL SAFE AND BE
ABLE TO
VOICE THEMSELVES.

QUESTION 5:

Why do you come out and get involved in the youth group? What's your motivation?

- "For real, I'm being forced" (some youth only come under parental pressure...)
- "As a newcomer the youth group helps to improve my English, and also provides volunteer hours that I need to graduate for my high school."
- "I would say because I want to get other youth's opinion and how they see the situation. Because I have my point of view so when I see their point view and we discuss together I might come up with new ideas that will help me. And of course we have fun, we spend some time together, we meet each other. That's good to meet each other because in this life you don't have time to make friends..."
- "The reason why I come to the youth group is to get the information, because in the group you discuss a lot of issues and information."
- "Life has changed since they joined the youth group, Some weren't going to school and now they do, because of advice and hearing other youth sharing's and testimony."
- "I get bored at home, and the youth group keeps me busy."

QUESTION 6:

What topics do you cover in the youth group? And do you feel like you have any say in it?

- "We never have a group. We just attend the activities that they offer... summer activities like going to the movies, canoeing, basically having fun together."
- "We recently, in the past few months, have had a sex and health workshop. We talked about issues around sex and how you have to be careful, you know not to get diseases."

Question 7:

Do you feel safe in the group?

- "My first time was not comfortable because I was new, but after attending 2 or 3 meetings I started feeling comfortable. I think for a newcomers it might be scary the first time, but it gets easier and more comfortable."
- "Sometimes... but NOT EVERYTIME, because everyone's face is so straight and scary."
- "When you first come to the youth group, they tell you that everything is voluntary. If you want to come you can come if you don't want to, you don't have to."

“ YOUTH LED IS WHEN YOUTH HAVE CONTROL OVER WHAT THE YOUTH GROUP'S NEXT MOVE OR PROJECT IS GOING TO BE

“ YOUTH-LED IS WHEN YOUTH LEAD AND CARRY OUT ACTIVITIES, YOUTH GROUPS, WORKSHOPS, ETC

“ YOUTH DECIDED MEANS THE YOUTH TELL THE YOUTH COORDINATOR WHAT THEY WANT TO DO AND THE COORDINATOR EXECUTES IT WITHOUT YOUTH INVOLVEMENT.

“ YOUTH-LED MEANS THE YOUTH RUN THE YOUTH PROGRAM AND YOUTH-DECIDED MEANS YOUTH ONLY MAKE DECISIONS

“ YOUTH-DECIDED SOUNDS MORE LIKE SOME OTHER POWER GETTING IN THE WAY OF WHAT THE NEXT “TOPICS” SHOULD BE AND THE YOUTH JUST GET TO PICK WHICH ONE IS BETTER.

QUESTION 8:

Does your youth group have an anti-oppression policy or practices? Like do issues around identity, sex and gender, status or race come up in the group? How are these issues handled? How are they talked about in the group? Or are they talked about at all?

- "We didn't mention about these issues, like sex, and gender. I only have experience at my school".
- "NO NO NO never".
- "We've never seen the paper form of the policy, but we have group norms that address these issues..."

QUESTION 9:

Is your youth group inclusive, do you feel you're included, or your voice is being heard and respected?

- "Yeah, I think it's heard, Although it can be more inclusive".
- "It depends. Some groups have specific criteria, like you have to be a refugee claimant or something. But once you fit these categories, you're very welcome."

QUESTION 10:

What do you think of the facilitation?! What do you think the role of youth coordinators is? Are they accessible and approachable?

- "They plan everything that we're gonna do, and we just attend the activity."
- "They are good in terms of organizing the events, informing us by email or even calling us every time there is an event."

- "They are there every time you have a question, they are there to answer, and they are friendly too."
- "We can have a one on one discussion with them, if you have any problem, they will be there for you."
- "For me I think they are accessible because they are free and they are very open and they are friendly, very loving and caring because they assist everywhere you have a problem. They talk to you some guidance and counseling."

QUESTION 11:

Are there more opportunities that you can participate in? Or would you like more opportunities and programs?

- "We have music classes that are running, and outdoor activities, but only in the summer."
- "I'd like to see more because maybe some people like dancing, and other people are maybe good in other things like socialization, maybe by talking. So I think we have to increase facilitation of another program, maybe youth want different things than the other group. So giving each group a space will be great."
- "We can have more regular activities or programs to do. Instead of once in a while! You know at least you get together; you share ideas and see your friends."



**One's moment,
one's freedom.**







HISTORY OF FCJ YOUTH NETWORK

THE STORY OF THE FCJ YOUTH NETWORK – PROMISING PRACTICES

We have to admit that we've come a long way since 2011 when the FCJ Youth Network began. At that time, more and more refugee and precarious migrant youth were coming to the Centre to seek advice about their immigration situations. We soon realized that there wasn't any place for newcomer and precarious migrant youth to meet, share their experiences and explore solutions to the different challenges and barriers they were experiencing.

The FCJ Refugee Centre responded to this by putting in an application for funding to the Counselling Foundation of Canada for a mentoring program that specifically targeted immigrant and refugee youth. We wanted to create a space where refugee and precarious migrant youth could feel welcome, express their thoughts and feelings without being judged, feel empowered to ask questions and access resources, and a place to have fun and meet new people – especially other people going through similar trials and tribulations.

And guess what? We got the green light on the application to start the group – and this project eventually exceeded all our expectations! Looking around the youth space today, you would never know that we used to have only four of us in these meetings. Today, we have more youth than chairs! But at the beginning, the process was not easy. We quickly learned the importance of outreach! The four initial core members were already volunteering at the FCJ Refugee Centre, and we had to do a lot of outreach to help the group grow. Even at our official launch event, we had the four core members, and a few people who wandered into the wrong room.

So, we had our work cut out for us! But perseverance and patience paid off! We continued to do outreach, and the core members started to do workshops at high schools and other settlement organizations. We were also lucky enough to connect with a few allies, including settlement workers in schools and shelter workers who started referring youth to the program. We should mention that all of these people were relieved that there was a youth-led program that was inclusive for non-status youth. We also learned that we needed to work hard to make the program barrier-free. We offered tokens and snacks, and made sure that youth had opportunity to help shape the group and discussions.

In addition to the regular group, we started the Art Between Us, Dance Steps Life Skills, and Uprooted U – which are only three examples of youth-decided projects that were suggested and developed by the youth in response to issues they were facing.

Looking back, it's been quite a ride! The youth group has grown immensely since those early days in the basement. We have taken it day-by-day to build an unparalleled space for youth to have their voices heard, have access to resources, and truly feel part of a community! We have built a lot of relationships along the way, like the Canadian Council for Refugees' Youth Network, as well as several local partners (Youth Without Shelter, The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, and several local colleges and Universities for example). We have learned from so many people, and most importantly we have discovered that this work cannot be done alone!

We've definitely had our ups and downs, and this journey has not been without its lessons. In the past four years we have welcomed more than 300 youth, with 20 – 25 people at any session. We are incredibly proud at how far we've come and believe that the future of the FCJ Youth Network is bright!



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE YOUTH GROUP...

There is no such thing as a typical day in our youth group! We always aim to start at 4:30, but youth can show up anytime from 3:00 to even 6:00! And although there are some regular faces, it's a different group every week. Sometimes we welcome new people who have never been to the group before, and sometimes we welcome back people who haven't been around for even a year or two. Whatever the composition of the group, there's always a great energy and a lot of laughter.

One common thread that runs through all our sessions is our weekly check-in. Every week a youth will volunteer to come up with a check-in question – which can range from saying your name and favourite colour, or what you had for breakfast that day! This is a great way to make new people feel welcome, and put us all on the same page (as we're all coming from different places during the day).

After the check-in, who knows? Sometimes we spend our time together just going through business – planning upcoming events, talking about projects and sharing news. Other times we might have a guest speaker to present on a specific topic, be doing a project together (like making a banner for Refugee Pride!), or addressing an issue that may have come up for someone in the group. Sometimes though, we spend the time playing games or just talking.

After the group “officially” finishes, most of us hang out for an extra hour or two. As the space feels comfortable and inclusive, we like to stay for as long as possible. Usually we just listen to music, and chat – which often quickly turns into a dance party. Eventually we all leave, having learned something from the many amazing minds that made up the room that day. And we know that it won't be long until we see each other again.

there's
always
a great
energy
and a lot of
laughter.



MY STORY... – HAYDAR

I came to Canada in April 2014. I had no friends here in Toronto and I became lonely. I spent most of my time in my room. After couple of months I joined the YMCA youth program and became a youth ambassador. It was great, and I made couple of friends and gained a really good experience there. It was mid-august 2014 when I met the FCJ Youth Network when we had the Youth Action Gathering in Toronto. That's when I realized a youth network like FCJ exists. A youth network where you can make friends, a youth network where you could share ideas, and a youth network that is genuinely helpful.

Since then, I have been involved in all of the programs and activities that the FCJ Youth Network has to offer. In the short time I have been involved in the group I have learned a lot and gained a wide variety of skills.

I have met great people who are always there for me and help me if I need them. The FCJ Youth Network became my family and it's always such an amazing experience being with them.

MAKING A YOUTH GROUP PARFAIT!

Building a safe and inclusive youth group might look different for everyone. However, in our own experience, and in the words of our youth, these are some important values that should be considered...





MY STORY... – FRANCOIS

My first months in Canada were filled with loneliness and depression. One day as I was going to CCVT (the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture) for my weekly counseling session and I happened to meet a friend who told me about FCJ and the FCJ youth network. I had a small experience with youth groups previously as I was involved with CCVT's. My first understanding or perspective on youth groups was just getting together a few times in a month or every few months and do a fun activity. But my perspective on youth groups quickly changed when I got involved with the FCJ youth group.

I will never forget the first day I came into FCJ's youth group! As I was entering the room everyone was smiley, happy and laughing. Everyone was so friendly to each other, but more importantly it seemed like ONE BIG FAMILY! I was struggling to figure out who's leading the youth group as ev-

everyone was talking to each other and laughing like long-time friends. The diversity and complicity between the youth and youth coordinators makes FCJ's youth group not a group! But A FAMILY.

Leaving everyone behind and coming to Canada by myself, I feel like it became my second family. I no longer feel alone, I feel included, I feel part of a family.





INTERSECTIONALITY

VALUING INTERSECTIONALITY AND CREATING A SAFE SPACE

Each member of our youth group is shaped by multiple identities, and as a result we face multiple challenges. It is important, when working under an anti-oppressive framework, to consider our intersecting identities (formed by age, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, social class, immigration status, sexual identity, experiences with authority/violence, etc.). This is what we call “intersectionality”. Intersectionality is a very complex term that can be defined in many different ways and means different things for different people. Often, the best way to talk about intersectionality is through examples, or by putting it in context.

To begin, we have to step back and reflect on our privileges, the multiple identities that shape us, and the different ways we have faced oppression and discrimination. When you look at any one of us, you may see a Latinx woman, a young black guy wearing his pants low, or a loud group of young people. But behind these visible

“stereotypes” each of us carries so much more. You don’t know how we came to Canada, what our status is, what health and mental health issues we face, what trauma we’ve faced, or any other aspects of our hidden selves. We have to remember that intersectionality invites us not to assume the identities of the people that we coexist with, but to acknowledge and value each person’s uniqueness.



Why is intersectionality important to think about when working with youth? We have to recognize that each person will experience oppression and privilege in a different way. For instance, in the FCJ Youth Network, although we share the common trait of being “new” to Canada, or having migrated here, it does not mean that we have experienced migration in the same way. In other words, we all came to Canada for different reasons, at different times, and may have different statuses. These differences are what make our stories and experiences as newcomer youth unique. When working in youth spaces, particularly newcomer youth spaces, it is important to take in consideration the multiple identities that are assembled there.

How can we work to make these spaces safe? To begin – have difficult conversations. Acknowledge your own power and privileges and how they might impact the members of the group. We acknowledge that it is quite unlikely that your space will ever be 100% safe or free from oppression, but it is important to keep talking about these issues. Talking about anti-oppression and intersectionality should not just be a one-time workshop, but these dialogues should be threaded through your whole program, events and activities. We might not do it every week, but we frequently bring up these values, and how we need to collectively shape a space where people feel included and safe. When running groups or providing services, it is important to work without assumption or judgement. Let the group own their own identities, give them space to acknowledge their biases, and work together to counter discrimination and violence. Finally,

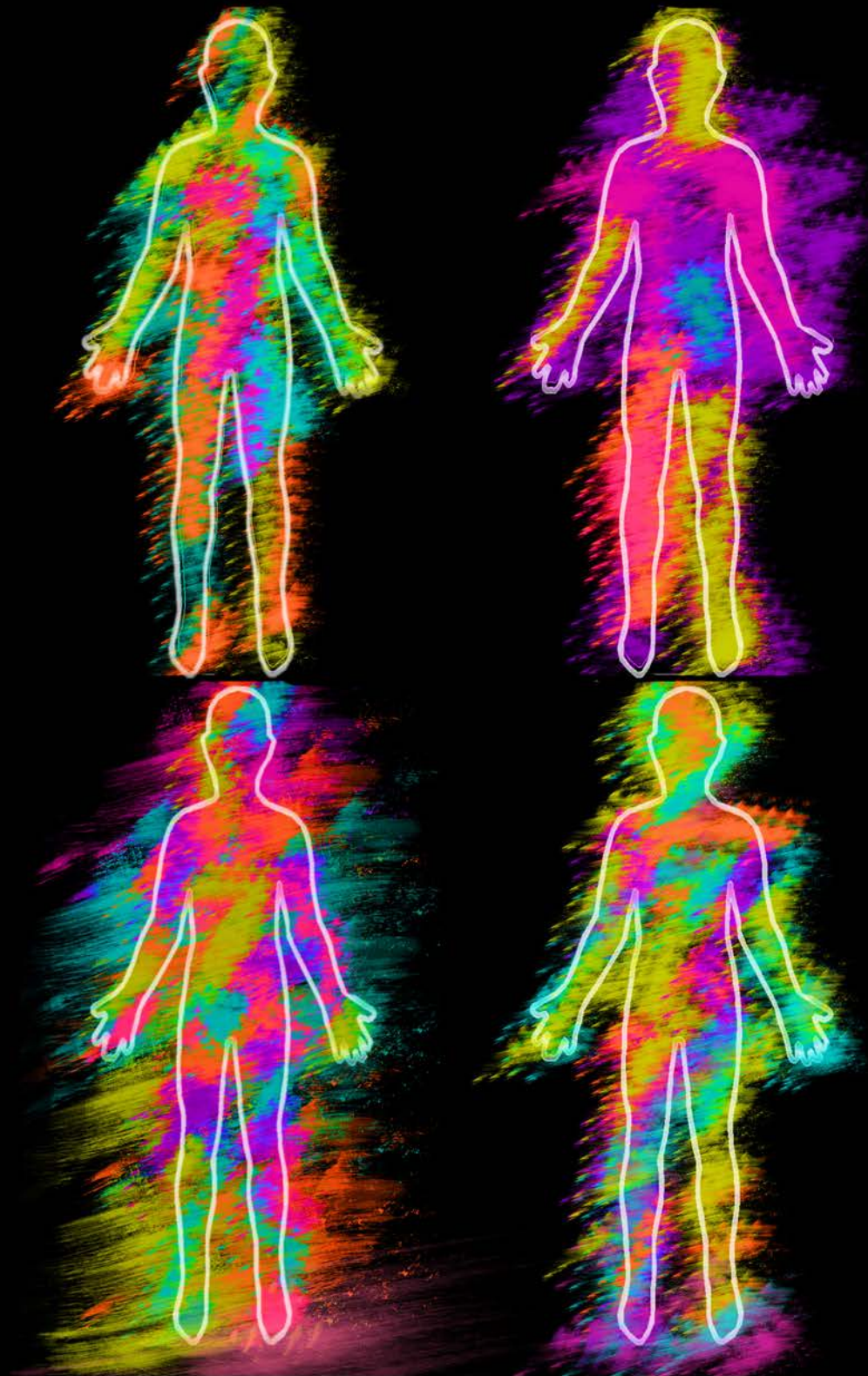
recognize that these discussions are difficult for many people, and if the journey to anti-oppression is longer for some, it doesn't mean we need to stop walking with them.

.....
: Behind :
: these visible :
: "stereotypes" :
: each of us carries :
: so much more. :
:
:



in·ter·sec·tion·al·i·ty

noun - intersecting social identities such as age, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, class, social status, immigration status, sexual identity, experiences with authority, violence, etc., shape our uniqueness and inform our complicated relationships with power, privilege and oppression. Intersectional approaches invite us to value the diversity of those around us rather than make assumptions.





**MENTORS, WORKERS,
COORDINATORS & ALLIES**

ROLE OF A YOUTH WORKER AND/OR COORDINATOR

A lot of people that bravely wear the title “Youth Worker” have unfortunately misinterpreted the term and meaning, as this role is moulded and shaped by different factors (funding, organizational policies, needs of the youth group, etc...). We cannot deny that this job involves a lot of responsibilities; however it is our experience from working with other newcomer youth groups, that what this job entails is much greater than what youth workers actually do. When a youth worker does not properly carry out their duties, the whole purpose of youth work is defeated, and this has numerous negative effects on the youth. It is for this reason that we have come up with some points that are meant to remind youth workers of the true scope of this job.



Do's	Dont's
<p>Encourage the youth to make decisions</p> <p>In order to have the voice of the youth heard, leave the brainstorming and decision-making up to the youth rather than doing it yourself. It might be sometimes difficult for youth to come up with topics and ideas, but the youth worker can help by giving options and a number of ideas for the youth to choose from.</p>	<p>Be the sole decision maker:</p> <p>As a youth worker who works for a group of youth or who facilitates a youth group, it is not the best idea to decide on what happens, and what goes on in the group. This doesn't mean that you need to sit back and do nothing, but allow yourself to be flexible and organic in your planning.</p>
<p>Let the youth run activities</p> <p>It will definitely be beneficial to the youth to plan events, lead workshops and connect with other organizations. This will create an amazing opportunity to bring out the talents of the youth, build important skills, and offer an invaluable opportunity to steer their own course through their settlement processes.</p>	<p>Run All Activities:</p> <p>Schooling and years of experience may have instilled any youth worker with a certain level of expertise; however, this doesn't mean you should eclipse the desires and needs of the youth. Give youth space in different areas, including facilitation, planning events, and general leadership.</p>
<p>Listen and pay attention... KNOW THE YOUTH!</p> <p>As a youth worker, it is very important to know the youth you work with. One of your duties may be to provide counselling to the youth – either formally or informally. Sometimes, the challenge might be to know when a youth is facing challenges as they will find it difficult to open up or even talk about it. ENGAGE in one on one conversations with the youth and get to know them more. In this way, you can build trust with them.</p>	<p>Assume:</p> <p>As a youth worker, you cannot sit back and assume that everything is going good. It is always important to check in with the youth, assisting them in different areas. If you cannot provide particular services such as crisis intervention, then you can refer them to other organizations or link them up with resources that can be beneficial. But do your best to support them through any referral process.</p>

We can't deny that being a youth worker is no easy task. And as you'll see in the next section, negotiating the needs of the youth and limitations imposed by an organization, funding schemes, or professional standards, can be nearly impossible. However, if you do your best to prioritize the needs of the youth, while helping to create a space where their voices can be heard, you're definitely on the right path.



MY STORY... – SUMMER

From the very first day I walked into this circle of different kinds of people from different cultures and different accents I knew it would be easy for me to blend in. I learned strength, courage, patience and confidence through making new friends. If only I had known about this group before maybe things would have been different. However, it's been almost 2 years since I joined this group and life became better for me during this time. This happened through the different social activities that the group does, like trips to parks, camping, holiday parties, birthday celebrations and even group meetings. I smile more often, I talk more often, and I laugh more often. There is always someone who can relate to any situation I have been in. After joining this group, I have never been alone. I was lead to the FCJ youth group by a situation I thought was going to be the end to my journey here in Canada... but like they say "every ending is a new beginning". My experience at FCJ group has just been the beginning of something marvelous for me.

ALLOWS US TO TAKE LEADERSHIP ROLES
“ IT IS A GOOD WAY TO VALUE OUR
CONTRIBUTIONS AS YOUTH TO THE
NETWORK.

IT'S TO BALANCE THE POWER
IN THE YOUTH GROUP “
BY ALLOWING THEM
TO TAKE LEADERSHIP ROLES
VALUE THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS AND
ALWAYS ASK FOR THEIR OPINION

**role of a youth
coordinator**

THEY ARE NOT
“ THERE TO
COMMAND
BUT HELP AID
THE YOUTH
IN WHATEVER
THEY WOULD LIKE
TO PURSUE.

**“FACILITATE THE RESOURCES FOR A YOUTH PROGRAM
BASED ON THE YOUTH’S NEEDS.**

**THE ROLE OF
A YOUTH MENTOR
IS TO GUIDE.”**

**HELP, AND
SUPPORT
THE GROUP**

**HELP BUILD CERTAIN SKILLS
IN THE YOUTH SUCH AS**

**“CONFIDENCE AND
MOST IMPORTANTLY
BE AN ALLY.**

**“ACT LIKE A PEACEKEEPING
FORCE IN THE GROUP,
ENSURING RESPECT AND THE
OVERALL SAFETY OF THE YOUTH.**



VOICE OF THE YOUTH WORKERS

A lot of organizations, shelters and agencies that serve youth have been structured in particular ways, and within this, the youth workers have very specific roles. Sometimes this is the result of the organization's mandate, or funding requirements that require specific tasks to be completed. We completely understand that in these cases the role of the youth worker is to try as much as possible to meet the parameters set out by the organization or funders. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that to better serve or assist someone, regardless of how they identify, the best way to go about it is to ask them what they want, and work from that. And so when a centre or organization has particular programs that have been designed without youth input or just for funding purposes, they might not actually be helping. It definitely works better when the youth decide at all levels of the program, or youth workers facilitate workshops and programs to have youth identify their needs.

*Talking with some youth workers across the city, they mentioned their key roles to be: **connecting youth with different resources, providing youth with informal counselling and support such as accompanying them to appointments.** Five youth workers we talked to thought it is extremely important to have youth input on all decisions. One of the youth workers defined **Youth Led** as “youth having first hand decisions in shaping sessions of the group...” This is a very important concept to keep in mind when*

you coordinate a group of youth or are the youth worker of an organization.

From the youth workers we talked to, ideas from the groups mostly come from the youth through different means, directly or indirectly. For example, a program or workshop could be born out of one-on-one meetings with the youth, where their needs are identified. Ideas on workshops or activities could also come up based on the current events or societal trends - like, a political issue, a health workshop, city conferences, for example. Most importantly, ideas come directly from the youth who might want to run a specific program or be part of a specific activity.

Youth-Led is:
“youth having
first hand
decisions
in *shaping*
sessions of the
group...”

Sometimes, running programs to fulfill funding requirements is tricky. Especially if the youth are not interested in attending, or do not find those programs useful or interesting. To properly engage youth, and better assist them, it definitely means having programs or activities that relate or respond to their needs.

The youth workers we spoke with all shared common challenges which included funding, insufficient staff, the stress of dealing with very complex situations and a need for more

training so as to be aware of different issues that affect youth. In most cases, it is one youth worker per organization, and they have to divide themselves throughout several areas to attend to the multiple needs of the youth. The youth workers are also faced with the challenge of complex diversities and

It means
being an
ally, and
being
available
& present

intersectionality and feel they need to acquire more training and experience in handling different situations.

We invited our youth worker at FCJ to also contribute his voice to the toolkit... Here's what he had to say:

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A YOUTH WORKER?

When I was approached by members of the FCJ Youth Network to contribute my definition of youth work to this toolkit, it caused me to reflect on my involvement with the youth at FCJ over the past four years. This journey began for me when we received funding to start a mentorship program for immigrant, refugee and precarious migrant youth – a project that responded to an emerging need by providing a range of opportunities for these populations. I didn't seek out this work, but rather stepped in to fill a vacant role as the project coordinator, and ensure that the project got off the ground. What I've learned from this exercise is that my understanding of the vastly complicated constellation of "youth work" has been fully formed and influenced by the youth

themselves. And in this guise any way that I would define youth work needs to be organic and flexible – constantly being reshaped and rescaled by the needs of the youth I work with, and the changing landscape within which I do this work.

There's definitely a balance that needs to be found. The role does come with responsibility – and in my experience this responsibility has included delegating resources; communicating information, opportunities and events; filtering requests for research and media participation; meeting funding requirements and seeking out new funding to meet emerging needs; providing orientation and support; and fostering dialogue to create a safe and inclusive space. A crucial piece of this has been to work patiently and unassumingly to help youth find their own voice and advocate for themselves.

But the other side of this work, the side that is perhaps much more vibrant and dynamic, asks me to go the extra mile. A youth worker needs to strive to meet youth where they're at, by listening to the individual and collective voices that echo in this arena, and whenever possible offer a way to amplify those voices so they can reach the people that really need to hear them. It means being an ally, and being available and present to fill a multiplicity of roles. It means toeing boundaries and working outside the nine-to-five. It might mean spending the day in court, bracing someone through a difficult appointment, or answering a Saturday night phone call – just to talk about the sunset.

Two and a half years into my involvement with the FCJ Youth Network, "Youth Coordinator" was added to my job title. But for me the inherent power and privilege that comes with this title doesn't give me the right



to define “youth work”. What I can say, is that what I have learned about youth work has come directly and brazenly from the youth themselves. It’s come through forging relationships where we begin to recognize the complexity of our identities and how these identities interplay in the formation of our shared space. And it has come from having real and raw conversations about the play of power, privilege and oppression – both within and beyond the walls of the great hall. As such, youth engagement, leadership and decision-making need to be pillars of this work. These values, along with establishing trust and allowing for missteps along the way, will continually inform my work – where I have so much more to learn.



LEARNING TO TRUST

For youth to engage in activities with new people, or even to start working in a new environment, they first have to know that they are able to trust the space. But, it isn't easy for many youth to do so given their various (and often difficult) situations.

Most youth who find themselves in the shelter system find it easier to engage with others there than they do at home or even in school. These situations occur due to the lack of understanding that others have had about their unique situations – especially youth who have presented distress/discomfort.

Most of us assume that youth are lashing out because of their age, maturity level or lack of discipline. C'mon, we have all been youth at one time or another and gone through these phases of misguided discipline! So why are we targeting youth who actually need our assistance in getting through their struggles? Yes, we do have different situations, but they all have slight similarities. A youth shelter is considered to be a space where they help youth overcome their domestic or even street troubles. They help youth

who are underhoused or homeless. True, regardless of their age, there is no obligation to try to help, but it doesn't hurt to reach out to them as they may be isolating themselves from the world outside.

For instance, Youth Without Shelter (YWS) is an organization that provides a great amount of resources and assistance in helping youth reach their goals, whether it may be in school, immigration, and even finding employment. They even help out and stay connected with youth after they leave the shelter. Important elements of YWS are that you're greeted with open arms, offered a place to stay, work with an incredibly friendly staff, and participate in daily activities such as Arts & Craft, information programs (such as workshops by students/professors From Humber College), and Internal Discussion & Movie Nights.

As a youth, I have been within the shelter system for roughly 1 year, I've been to Seaton House, Second Base, YWS (Youth Without Shelter), Wilkinson's (Wilkinson's All Mens Shelter), and Cawthra Shelter.

Youth Engagement is important in these settings as it is the environment and groups of people that young people feel comfortable about being in or around.

My observation and involvement with some of the youth in the shelters that I have been in is that they feel safer and more welcome within shelters and other communities rather than being home.

Some of the shelters, I must add, do not have youth-engagement models. They are more of just a roof over their heads until the youth move out or hit the age of automatic discharge.

There are some staff that do try to reach out to youth to make them feel safe, but in the long run they also become overwhelmed.

Some youth have encountered such harsh experiences that it's hard to even reach out because their trust barriers have become so rigid that they find it easier to take on their problems without having the advice of another.

All of these things are important to consider when working with youth in a shelter setting, and youth engagement needs to extend to this arena.



HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE YOUTH ALLY

DOs	DONT's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and support our group and cause: Walk with us in solidarity by educating yourself about the issues that we face – but walk this journey for us! We welcome your participation and desire to learn with us, but our voices are paramount in this world. Take the time to really listen to what we're saying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use us as a stepping stone! We are not here for your own advancement, research, grades, or need to pat yourself on the back. If that's your destination, you are probably on the wrong path.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave your assumptions at the door! Each member of our group is a dynamic rainbow, and cannot be judged by any single aspect of our identities! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to fit us into boxes! We have the potential to surprise you around every turn. Give us the space to show you who we really are and what we're capable of!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strive to understand and acknowledge each person's uniqueness. Navigating diverse identities in the same space may be difficult (especially when valuing safety), but offering the space for members to disclose how they identify at their own pace can be a crucial first step. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be tokenistic. You're not being inclusive unless your space is legit open to everyone regardless of anything. Sneaking that one non-status youth past the gate doesn't make you a pillar of the Sanctuary City movement. And for those of us that are here, don't force us to bear the weight of any identity in its vast entirety. We may not be the Muslim you think you know, our "gay" may not be your "gay", nor should our roots in any country bear the weight of that country's history, culture and traditions.

DOs	DONT's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a step back and prioritize a space for others to participate. Ask yourself how much your voice has been heard and how necessary it is for that to happen. Chances are, there are probably moments where you can lend some expertise, or offer guidance, but let the youth have the floor first. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take up too much space. Taking up space can happen in a variety of ways – it may be dominating the conversation, putting your (or your organization's) agenda before that of the group, or even how you enter and sit in the room.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept your mistakes. Of course we're not perfect, and working in this field definitely has its pitfalls. But when you make a mistake (which we all have the great potential to do), engage in a process of reflection and inquiry to learn from your mistakes and move forward positively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be oblivious to who's in the room – including yourself. Listen to what people have to say and how they want to be identified. When you aren't sure about something, inquire – but do so respectfully and appropriately.





NAVIGATING SYSTEMS

NAVIGATING SYSTEMS AS A NEWCOMER YOUTH

We would like to acknowledge that societal systems have been designed to fit a particular type of person – namely a heterosexual white able-bodied male.

As young people, immigrating to a new country can be a turning point in our lives. People start telling you “do not worry you are young...you will easily adapt to the ‘new culture’”, but when you start navigating that “new culture” you find out that there are a lot of systems that you have to deal with, and in order to succeed you must be able to assimilate. When we talk about navigating the systems we are referring to immigration, school, police enforcement, mental health, housing, and other settlement services. Each of our experiences when dealing with those systems have been different and unique, the only common thing, or similarities that we encounter are long processes and non-newcomer youth friendly spaces.

Another important aspect of navigating these systems is the lack of resources and flexibility that we encounter among them. For example, one of the first barriers that newcomer youth encounter is language. Most services, as we know, are provided in English or French, so for many youth, not having someone that can support them with the language can lead to many

processes being postponed: for example school registration. It can also cause a lot of isolation or bullying, and many of them stop attending school or their youth group because they cannot communicate with others. The language barrier is one of the many consequences that exists in the system due to the lack of resources for newcomer youth.

When we talk about the lack of resources, it is important to note that we also find ourselves in a system where there is zero access to appropriate mental health support, particularly for

Each of our
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newcomer youth dealing with a precarious status. Here at the FCJ Refugee Centre, we have found ways to make sure newcomer youth can access mental health support.

Most of it has been done through networking and partnering with other organizations, which in turn has boosted the youth to come out and raise awareness around these barriers.

Another almost invisible barrier for newcomer youth is housing; although there are well known youth shelters in the city, many newcomer youth who live in those shelters start dealing with many invisible barriers, like lack of understanding from the youth workers at the shelter, or a lot pressure put on them to follow immigration processes that might not be the ideal for their situation in Canada.

When it comes to employment barriers, these can vary from very precarious work conditions to not being able to find a job because there is no “Canadian experience” on our resumes.

Challenging these privileged systems as newcomers to Canada can be quite tricky, however we have learned that if we persevere we do have a voice that can be heard. In the following pages you will see an example of one of our campaigns - one where we celebrate quite a bit of success!





LOST & FOUND

I come from a country where there is no justice, no peace; but corruption, discrimination, tribalism and extremely low living standards. Despite these roots, I am proud of who I am. In the midst of these tribulations, I came to understand the basic concepts of life and so chose a different path to follow; and a career that will champion the rights of the oppressed and bring the perpetrators to light. Rather than jump on the band wagon and follow the trail of what almost the whole nation wishes to be part of because it seems to be the only way to survive, that is; "eating the National Cake"... meaning everyone trying to take part in the corruption, I thought otherwise. Choosing to do the right thing definitely meant offending those in power. This led to a series of life threatening situations.

Just like in the movies I used to watch when I was a kid, young people will leave their countries and go to a new world, leaving their families, love ones, friends and all their livelihood behind, in search of a better life. And seeing these things, I thought it was just for movie purposes and entertainment.

Years later, I found myself in the same situation, pulling my suitcase in the Streets of Toronto. And making calls

after calls on the pay phone; calls that lead to nothing. As big as my bags and suitcases were, they contained nothing valuable. The only valuables I had were DREAMS and HOPES and AMBITIONS. These were enough to keep me going. And for the mere fact that I knew I was safe and there will be a way, I was more than contented. The people on the streets smiled at me, everyone was extremely polite and even though I had no idea where I would lay my head that night, I felt totally welcome and happy. It definitely was a long and tedious journey; physically and more psychologically strenuous, but one thing kept me: Determination to succeed! I knew that I couldn't face worse. I had seen it all. I didn't know what will be worse than losing a loved one for your sake; I didn't think anything will be worse than all that had happened. And for the mere fact that I made it to this Bright New World, was enough reason to make me think I could start afresh.

Even though it is a tedious process to get settled, because of the obvious numerous barriers (Including culture Shock, climate change, making friends, resources, accessing education, Health care etc)...It is a land of Potential and full of opportunities...





ME SCREAMING FOR 5 MINUTES – RU

They always tell you that life is hard, that you must learn to deal with the difficulties that it throws at you in order to become stronger. They never warn you that life can scar you for a long time; they never tell you that sometimes, just “trying harder” isn’t going to be enough.

They never tell you that trying harder can bring you under water, drown you, and utterly destroy your will of even trying at all.

No one ever tells you to look out for yourself.

They have always asked you to try harder, become someone important, noticeable... That with your “good grades” and “perfect English” you will have the world handed to you on a silver plate, cooked to perfection and plated in the way that will gratify you and satisfy your hunger.

They only ask you to please continue trying and bringing the honor and success you’ve been given since childhood.

“You’re a lucky child,” they say.

“You have the potential to become someone better,” they say.

All the while, the weight on your shoul-

ders seems to become more and more noticeable as years go by. Little by little, life reminds you that in fact all the success and glory you’ve been feeling is actually a trap.

It all started around fourth grade. Mathematics seemed to never make sense and it frustrated you a lot. At the end of the year, you snapped; you figured it was nothing, after all but you never actually knew why did it hurt so much to see your grade drop below average and why your mother’s disappointed face haunted you wherever you were.

It’s not until you were crying your eyes out while your mother continued to yell at you about how you were a failure that you understand something. It was the first time you’d fail at bringing what was expected, and maybe you were barely 10, but it left a long lasting impression that would continue to torment you for the rest of your life.

You stop talking after that. You become invested in learning how to conceal emotions, and while you do your best to learn and keep a normal appearance, life continues to throw rocks at your feet and you continue to stumble and fall. By the beginning of 5th grade, your room is empty and all the things you were allowed to keep were neatly packed in

an old backpack.

You realize that life is indeed, stupid.

In 6th grade you feel lost. Everyone around you didn't make sense and the few words you manage to catch would leave you confused and alone. You develop a sense of dread when thinking about school, walking the hallways and looking ridiculous in your khaki pants and white polo shirt. You stop feeling confident about yourself. You don't wear skirts anymore. Acting like everything is okay seems like too much effort.

You still pretend, though; but you convince your family that you developed a hatred for skirts.

You didn't.

You focused on learning, focus on bringing back that glory, that success that you once knew, and make your family proud. You think that maybe you'll start feeling a bit better about yourself if you manage to pull it off. Fortunately for you, it works, and you're given an identity, a title to hold on to and a new form of success.

Your mother is proud, and you feel lighter and happier with what you have accomplished.

You never notice the weight on your shoulders increasing.

Looking back, you never stopped to notice how, in the process of gaining what you think made you who you were, that you lost your ability to trust and talk to people. It was not until you were in

high school that you noticed how utterly alone you were. How worthless and unnecessary all of your existence was, and in that moment, the weight on your shoulders grew so heavy, that it was impossible for you to ignore it.

You were suddenly drowning in thoughts, speculations, responsibility, and expectations. The false hope you had created was completely destroyed and you understood that, in fact, your success was built on nothing but lies and make belief.

The word "hate" becomes the first word to come to mind when describing yourself.

You came to realize this was how it all started. Waking up at noon, eating breakfast barely once a month (if not never), forcing yourself to make conversation with classmates because you had to- for your group project. It was all done manually, but without any feeling behind it. You close the doors to everyone- your family, yourself...

It wasn't until you were locked in the bathroom at 10 pm, looking at your tear stained face in the mirror while trying to control your hard, labored breathing, that you realized there might be something completely wrong with you.

Your nephews were outside- they never questioned you when you would lock yourself away, but you knew that they knew you weren't happy.

You decide that, if anything, it was not worth putting them through the hell you managed to drag yourself into.

It's not until you move countries again that you are told what you always suspected. You're 17 years old and had adjusted to your lonely way of life. You don't really care who talks to you anymore, you make less effort into trying to leave an impression, but you somehow still care.

You would tell yourself that it doesn't matter, that you only need the few friends-and handful of online ones- to keep you company.

You are not good at listening to yourself.

Days go on and you begin to embrace your inner hatred towards yourself. You continue to judge your actions, to belittle yourself, all the while fooling everyone around you that you are as happy as they expect you to be.

Your mother becomes more bitter towards your decisions and you lose your will to stay strong.

You no longer have the excuse of being a child, after all. They all know you're capable of making smart decisions, and they want you to make them; but you don't know how.

That was when you started piling on more responsibility.

You begin to have breakdowns- ugly things, really, that crush you on the inside. It made it hard to breathe, and the room spun. During these breakdowns

you cry yourself to sleep. You scratch at your arms until red marks form and stay for hours. You bite the inner skin of your thumb.

All the while, remaining as quiet as possible. Crying becomes a thing to do while in bed while your mom is asleep. During the day, you pretend everything is okay, that the scratches are because of some weird rash, and that your sleepless nights are caused by nightmares.

They still ask you to get counseling, and you accept to make them happy. You never actually like it- it makes you uncomfortable and upset. Talking about your problems to the lady makes you have more breakdowns.

You decided to stop going.

When they ask you why, you tell them it's because the counselor "hadn't felt right" for you. They accept that and move on.

It's not until you're 19 years old that someone in your family notices how utterly broken you are. You're grateful, but at the same time, you didn't know how to accept their help... you never know how to. They still try to help and you try to cooperate, but in the end the entire thing makes you frustrated.

You, of course, close the doors again.

It takes you one fast paced job, a bad costumer, and 2 hours of trying not to break down in public to finally admit to

yourself that you need help. After your shift was done, you spend the ride home at the back of the bus, sobbing into the microphone of your headphones while your best friend tries to calm you down while you let a year worth of pretending crumble around you.

You hate crying in public, but you really don't give a damn.

By the time you get home, your eyes and nose are both red. You pretend to be too tired and promptly fall asleep; this was the only night you didn't have a nightmare.

You quit your job, saying that they were planning on letting you go anyways, and instead focus on researching about yourself. You try to understand why would you feel like this, begin to ask

questions. You finally find your answer and begin to take steps to recovery, and although alone, you somehow manage to bring yourself out of the hole you had fallen into.

Breathing becomes a little easier. Looking at yourself in the mirror is now an okay thing to do.

And as time goes on, you become better at accepting people into your life.

You are still in the hole.

You still have downward spirals.

You are not completely okay.

But you somehow manage to soldier on now with hopes that in the future, breathing will be effortless again.



Illustration by [signature]



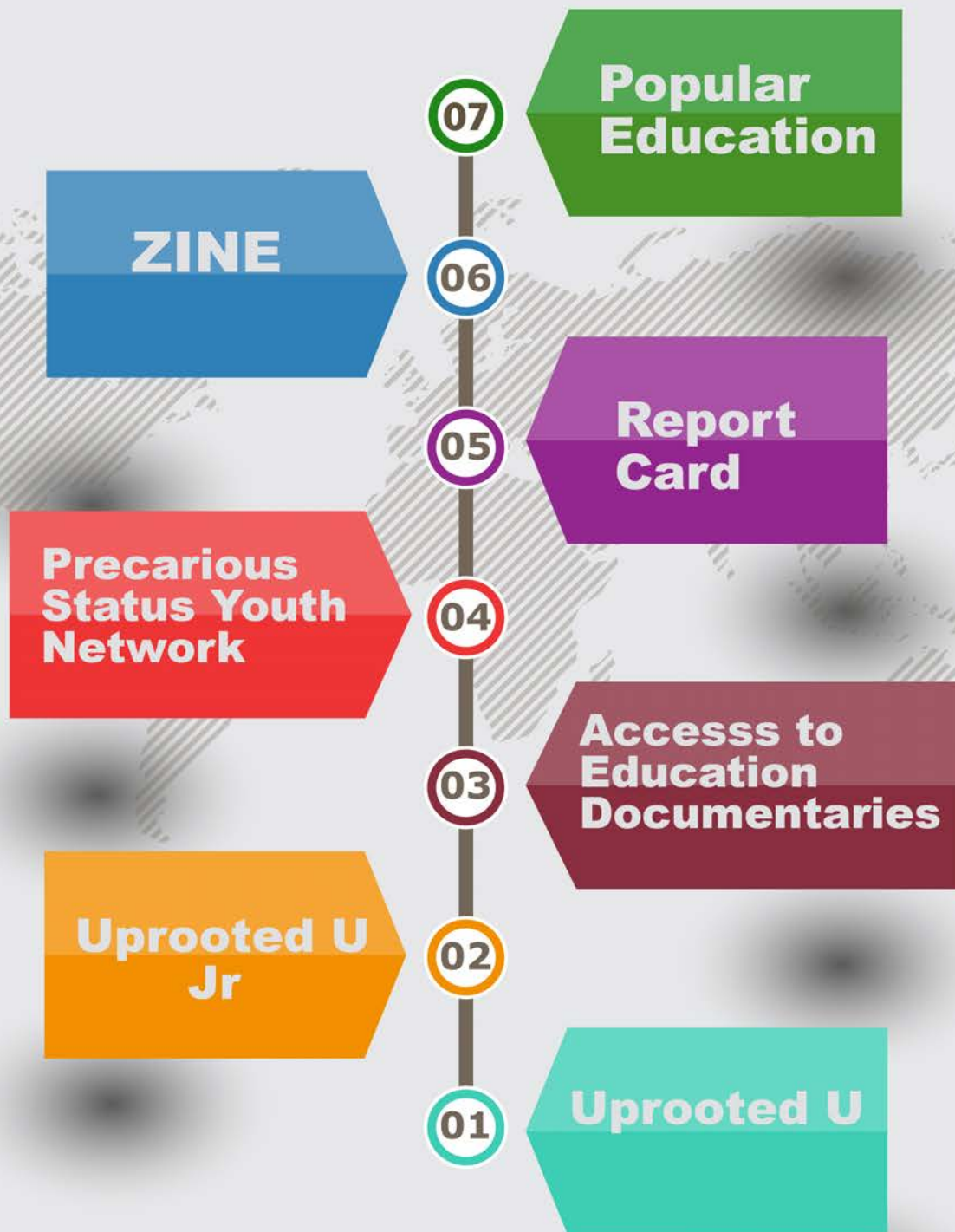
MY STORY... – JULIA

Coming to Canada was the hardest thing I ever did in my life. Knowing that I am going to live with a family member who is more like a stranger to me, in a new place where I don't know anybody, and nobody can understand me because of my "accent" was extremely scary and risky. After being in Canada for a while, I heard about the FCJ Refugee Centre and I decided to make a call, and I was invited to visit them the same day. After meeting the staff I felt welcome and comfortable. They introduced me to some of the youth and invited me to attend the youth meeting. Saying yes was the best decision I ever made! The FCJ Youth Network became the place that I call my home. I now spend my time with people that are welcoming, kind and loving. They made me feel comfortable enough to be me and speak my language - and whether or not they understood me, they made the best of it. Smiles, laughter, activities and discussing topics that are relevant to me... every second spent there is worth it - whether I am learning something new or interacting with the Centre's staff and community members, I am happy. They became my family, they became a part of my identity. After a couple of months I was forced to stop attending FCJ by a family member, and at that time I felt as if something that meant a lot to me was taken away. I went into a dark state and hit a real rough patch, but was helped by staff at the Centre and supported by my new family in the youth network. I am now a foster kid and I feel as if I have the biggest most loving family a young lady could ask for. We share so much – we laugh, cry and build a ton of memories together. Every day I thank god for meeting these people because without them sometimes I wonder where I would be, who I would have become and what would have happened to me. The FCJ Refugee Centre is a safe space where I can be me and be comfortable, where I can be informed and learn something new and also be around the people that mean the most to me.



**A YOUTH-LED RESPONSE:
ACCESS TO EDUCATION**

ACCESS TO EDUCATION CAMPAIGN



ACCESS TO EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

Housing, employment, lack of mental health services, language barriers (and much more!) have been identified to be some of the common challenges faced by newcomer youth. As a group, we have worked to create a space to discuss these challenges, and come up with different ways to respond to these barriers. Access to education (in terms of both high school and post-secondary) has stood out to be one of the most challenging barriers that affects newcomer youth, especially those with precarious immigration status.

Responding to the barrier of accessing education, we have created and been part of a wide range of events and activities - all aimed at raising awareness about the issue, and to begin to see the change that is required. Here are a few ways in which the FCJ Refugee Centre and the FCJ Youth Network have worked and been involved in responding to the need for education:



UPROOTED U

- Uprooted U was started as a result of youth not being able to access Post-Secondary Education for different reasons (Immigration Status, Finances, Language etc). This school, which is housed at the FCJ Refugee Centre, connects youth with professionals in different fields and reflect a range of careers as chosen by the youth. Throughout the school semester, they also attend regular classes to acquire basic skills such as presentation, writing and research skills. At the same time they are supported and receive help navigating Canadian Education Systems. Uprooted U just celebrated its 2 year anniversary, and classes continue to be well-attended!



UPROOTED U JR

- Based on their own experiences in facing barriers with education, members of the FCJ Youth Network banded together to form Uprooted U Jr – a free school for precarious status migrant youth who can't get into elementary or high school. Running three days a week, this youth-led, youth-decided program is run on a volunteer basis, and provides lessons for younger children who need to develop skills and improve their abilities in a variety of subjects. Many of the kids who come for class are awaiting admission into regular school.



ACCESS TO EDUCATION DOCUMENTARIES

- A more creative response to the issue, definitely aimed at raising awareness, the youth worked with a professional filmmaker to produce a short documentary about this issue. In the video called **NO-LEDGE**, six youth shared their stories on how inaccessible education has been since their arrival to Canada. They raised the concern of lack of information from either school authorities and guidance councillors, and the fact that finances are a definite barrier. Most of the youth could neither access student loans nor qualify for assistance or bursaries. This powerful video was launched and shown on a lot of spaces, including at in-person presentations, and shared widely through social media.



PRECARIOUS STATUS YOUTH NETWORK

- The Precarious Status Youth Network (PSYN), is a coalition that was formed as a result of the the need for a more concerted response to the issues faced by precarious status youth. This coalition includes allies and organizations that are involved with making a change in different systems to better assist or accommodate Precarious Status Youth. They meet regularly to discuss strategies on how to move forward and better assist youth. Access to education has been adopted as one of the key campaigns of this group, who continue to find appropriate solutions.

05

REPORT CARD

- Recognizing that there are multiple barriers that impact precarious migrant youth attending high school in Ontario, the FCJ Youth Network, supported by the Laidlaw Foundation, is putting together a provincial report card to raise greater visibility of these issues. With the inclusion of the voices of precarious migrant youth from across Ontario (as well as youth workers, and school staff), we hope that we can provide a good analysis of this issue, and hopefully ignite change – improving the educational experience of precarious status migrant youth.

06

ZINE

- Another creative way the youth have responded to the issue of Access to Education is by coming out with a visual representation of the problem. Through YOUTHREX funding, the youth have produced a zine that represents the access to education in a more exciting and engaging way.

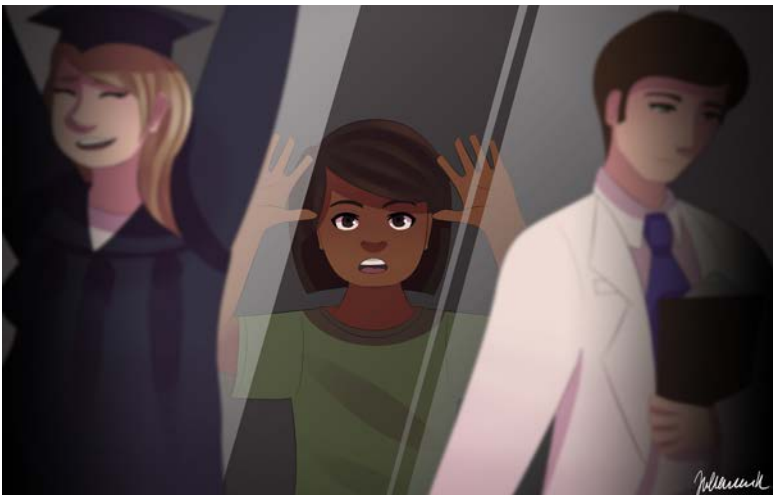
07

POPULAR EDUCATION

- The FCJ Refugee Center and the FCJ Youth network have worked hard to engage multiple stakeholders in this discussion and raise more awareness in several ways, including meetings, workshops, guest speaking engagements and other events. Being part of the Canadian Council for Refugees has been beneficial in spreading the word as speaking up in several consultations and meetings, which allow us to reach a wider audience (including government workers). Additionally, the Youth Network has done presentations on Access to Education in Seneca College, York University, University of Toronto, presented at national, provincial and municipal conferences.

MONSTERS IN SCHOOL -NIEL

I can feel their piercing eyes on me
Examining me, scanning me
Dissecting my persona layer by layer
As if I were some strange creature
That was newly discovered
“Go back home”
I hear whispers echoing around me
“We don’t want you here”
It pulsates through my very core
Making me feel alone
Unwanted, unwelcomed
But I keep smiling...
Pretending...
That I’m ok
Because I will never surrender
To the monsters
Hiding in my High school



PLANET CANADA -NIEL

I just landed on a new planet; Canada
“I come in peace”, I shouted
But I felt that I was doubted
I waved to show greetings
But all I got were hollow feelings
Asking me
Why do I talk like that?
I don’t know what you’re saying; Language
Why do I act like that?
That’s so strange; Culture

I just landed on a new planet; Canada
“We welcome you”, they screamed
But they were a bit extreme
Constantly collecting data
“Don’t ask, don’t tell”
Ha! More like
“Answer or else”

I just landed on a new planet; Canada
All I wanted was to learn
To understand
An Education...
But all I got was confusion...,
Prejudice...
And rejection...







RESOURCES

SETTLEMENT

Access Alliance Multicultural and Community Services

Provides free settlement services to support newcomers through the difficult process of adjusting to a new country.

340 College Street, TO, ON, M5T 3A9	T: (416) 324-8677 F: (416) 324-9074 Confidential Fax: (416) 324-9490	Monday: 9am-8pm Tuesday: 9am-5pm Wednesday: 1pm-5pm Thursday: 9am-5pm Friday: 9am-5pm Sat & Sun: Closed
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FCJ Refugee Centre

FCJ Refugee Centre is a centre that provides services and support for precarious migrants that are new to Canada.

208 Oakwood Avenue, TO, ON, M6E 2V4	T: (416) 469-9754 F: (416) 469-2670	Monday to Friday: 9:30am-5pm
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MENTAL HEALTH

Centre for Addition and Mental Health (CAMH)

Offers psychiatrists, nurses, psychologists, social workers, child and youth workers, therapists and others. Open to all including those with precarious status and non-status.

1001 Queen St. W TO, ON, M6J 1H4	T: (416) 535-8501	Monday to Friday: 8:30am-4:30pm
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The Access Point

Offers individual mental health and addictions support services and supportive housing.

661 Yonge St., 4th Floor, TO, ON, M4Y 1Z9	T: (416) 640-1934 F: (416) 499-9716	Monday to Friday: 9am-5pm
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Psychiatrist Services - FCJ Refugee Centre

208 Oakwood Avenue, TO, ON, M6E 2V4	T: (416) 469-9754 F: (416) 469-2670	Call for appointment
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EDUCATION

Uprooted U - FCJ Refugee Centre

An education program for non-status and precarious migrant youth who are facing challenges in enrolling in college and university.

208 Oakwood Avenue,
TO, ON, M6E 2V4

T: (416) 469-9754
F: (416) 469-2670

Tuesday: 2pm-4pm

Helping Youth Pursue Education (HYPE) Program - Centennial College

This program focuses on building employment capacity with participants, based on comprehensive assessment, and individualized Career Action Plan to identify critical skill gaps and a strategy for acquiring them, supported with coaching/mentoring to build healthy social networks and job search networks. Participants can include those with precarious status.

941 Progress Avenue,
TO, ON, M1G 3T8

T: (416) 289-5000
Ext. 3363

Six Week Summer Program

Ryerson University Now (RUN) Program - Ryerson University

The RUN Program aims to encourage high school students and community members to participate in post-secondary education by offering them a credit course from the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education.

297 Victoria Street,
TO, ON, M5B 1W1

T: (416) 979-5000
Ext. 2291
F: (416) 979-5309

Monday: 9am-5pm
Tuesday: 10:30am-6:30pm
Wednesday: 9am-5pm
Thursday: 10:30am - 6:30pm
Friday: 9am-4pm

Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre

Program for numeracy and literacy for youth who are 19+. Open to all status youth, however, documentation will need to be filled out for government purpose.

1900 Davenport Road,
TO, ON, M6N 1B7

T: (416) 656-8025
Ext. 421
T: (416) 656-1264

Monday to Friday:
8:30pm-4:30pm

HEALTH

Immigration Women's Health Centre

Sexual health clinic for those with or OHIP.

489 College St. Suite 200 TO, ON, M6G 1A5	T: (416) 323-9986 F: (416) 323-0447	Monday to Thursday: 9am-5pm By Walk-in only
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Hassle Free Clinic

Sexual health clinic for uninsured and LGBTQ+ individuals.

66 Gerrard St. East TO, ON, M5B 1G3	T: (416) 922-0566	Please call ahead to confirm walk-in and appointment only hours.
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Queen West Community Health Centre - IMAGINE Clinic

Clinic available to those who are without status.

168 Bathurst Street TO, ON, M5V 2R4	T: (416) 703-8480 F: (416) 703-8479	Saturday: 10am-2pm By Walk-in only
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Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services

Clinic available to those who are without status.

761 Jane Street, 2nd Floor TO, ON, M6N 4B4	T: (416) 760-2815 F: (416) 760-8670	Monday & Thursday: 4pm-7:30pm By Walk-in only
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Community Volunteer Clinic for the Medically Uninsured

Clinic available to those without status (including refugees and homeless person).

1127 Markham Rd, Unit 1 Scarborough, ON, M1H 2Y5	T: (647) 267-2176 F: (416) 264-4456	Tuesday & Thursday: 5pm-8:30pm By Walk-in only
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Primary Care Clinic - FCJ Refugee Centre

Clinic available to ALL without health coverage.

208 Oakwood Avenue TO, ON, M6E 2V4	T: (416) 469-9754 F: (416) 469-2670	Saturday (except long weekends): 10am-1pm Tuesday (twice a month): 5:30pm-8pm By Appointment only
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New Best Care Medical Centre <i>Clinic available to those without OHIP coverage.</i>		
790 Burnhamthorpe West, Unit 4, Mississauga, ON L5C 4G3	T: (647) 200-3353	Sunday: 2pm-5pm Friday: 4pm-7pm By Appointment only
EdgeWest - Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre <i>Offers youth-positive health care, mental health support and referrals, sex-positive health information and services, low cost (or free!) birth control and STI testing to youth between the ages of 13 and 29</i>		
1900 Davenport Road TO, ON, M6N 1B7	T: (416) 652-4363	Monday & Wednesday: 4pm-8pm Saturday: 10am-2pm By Walk-in only
Free Medical Clinic for the Uninsured - Scarborough <i>Clinic available to uninsured (including refugees, visitors, international students)</i>		
100 McLevin Avenue, Unit 2A, Scarborough, ON, M1B 5K1	T: (416) 291-1027 F: (416) 291-0896	Check for hours of operation on website (hours vary weekly/monthly): www.muslimwelfare-centre.com
Free Medical Clinic for the Uninsured - Mississauga <i>Clinic available to uninsured (including refugees, visitors, international students)</i>		
780 Burnhamthorpe Road West, Unit 4, Mississauga, ON, L5C 3X3	T: (905) 306-8371 F: (905) 306-8372	Check for hours of operation on website (hours vary weekly/monthly): www.muslimwelfarecentre.com
Evergreen Centre for Street-Involved Youth <i>Offers several services to street involved and homeless youth 24 years and under (no minimum age), such as health, dental, and specialist services</i>		
381 Yonge Street, TO, ON, M5B 1S1	T: (416) 929-9614 ext. 2238 F: (416) 597-1081	Monday to Friday: 1pm – 4:30pm By Walk-In only

EMPLOYMENT

Worker's Action Centre

A worker-based organization that provides information and rights advice to people in low-wage and unstable employment.

720 Spadina Avenue TO, ON, M5S 2T9	T: (416) 531-0778 F: (416) 533-0107	Monday to Wednesday: 11am-3pm Thursday: 1pm-3pm
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FCJ Refugee Centre

Provide orientation, resume and job search assistance, and employment related referrals for diverse newcomer populations.

208 Oakwood Avenue, TO, ON, M6E 2V4	T: (416) 469-9754 F: (416) 469-2670 Visit uprootedyouth.ca	Monday to Friday: 9:30am-5pm
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HOUSING

Youth Without Shelter

Emergency shelter for homeless youth who are between the ages of 16 and 24.

6 Warrendale Court TO, ON, M9V 1P9	T: (416) 748-0110 F: (416) 748-2169	Open 24 hours, 7 days a week
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Covenant House

Emergency shelter available to youth with or without status.

20 Gerrard Street East TO, ON, M5B 2P3	T: (416) 598-4898 F: (416) 204-7030	Open 24 hours, 7 days a week
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Sojourn House

Offers shelter (emergency and transitional housing), settlement conseling, and referrals to alternative services and assistance for those with refugee status.

101 Ontario Street TO, ON, M5A 2V2	Shelter/Housing: (416) 864-0515 Transitional Housing: (416) 864-9900	
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HOUSING		
Romero House		
<i>Offers housing, settlement and advocacy services to resettled refugees.</i>		
1558 Bloor Street West TO, ON, M6P 1A4	T: (416) 763-1303 F: (416) 763-2939	24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Transitional Housing Program – FCJ Refugee Centre		
<i>Transitional housing and settlement support for refugee and precarious migrant women.</i>		
208 Oakwood Avenue TO, ON, M6E 2V4	T: (416) 469-9754 Ext. 229 T: (416) 469-2670	Monday: 9am-5pm Wednesday: 9am-2pm

PARENTS & EXPECTING PARENTS		
Jessie's House		
<i>A multi-service resource centre for pregnant teenagers, young parents and their children.</i>		
205 Parliament Street TO, ON, M5A 2Z4	T: (416) 365-1888 F: (416) 365-1944	Monday to Thursday: 9am-5pm Friday: 9am-2pm
Transitional Housing Program – FCJ Refugee Centre		
<i>Transitional housing and settlement support for refugee and precarious migrant women.</i>		
208 Oakwood Avenue TO, ON, M6E 2V4	T: (416) 469-9754 Ext. 229 T: (416) 469-2670	Monday: 9am-5pm Wednesday: 9am-2pm

LGBTQ+

Support Our Youth (SOY Main Office)

A community development program designed to improve the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgendered youth in Toronto through the active involvement of youth and adult communities.

333 Sherbourne St. 2nd Floor, TO, ON M5A 2S5	T: (416) 324-5077 F: (416) 324-4262	Monday to Friday: 10am-5pm
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The 519 Church Street Community Centre

Multiple programs and support for LGBTQ+ newcomer communities.

519 Church Street TO, ON, M4Y 2C9	T: (416) 392-6874 F: (416) 392-0519	Monday to Friday: 8:30am-10pm Saturday: 9am-10pm Sunday: 10am-5pm
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LEGAL

Downtown Legal Services

Provides free legal services for low-income residents of Toronto and University of Toronto residents in five areas of law: criminal law, family law, refugee and immigration law, tenant housing, and university affairs

655 Spadina Avenue TO, ON, M5S 2H9	T: (416) 978-6447 F: (416) 934-4536	Monday to Friday: 9am-5pm
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Rexdale Community Legal Clinic

Provide legal services for those who have a low-income.

21 Panorama Court, Suite 24, TO, ON, M9V 4E3	T: (416) 741-5201 F: (416) 741-6540	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 9am-5pm Wednesday: 1pm-5pm
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LEGAL

Legal Aid Ontario

Legal assistance – eligibility based on personal and financial information. Strongly recommended to have somebody (e.g. youth worker or settlement worker) to help with this process.

40 Dundas Street West Suite 200, TO, ON M5G 2H1	T: (416) 979-1446 F: (416) 979-8669	Monday to Friday: 8am-5pm
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Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

Services for women who have experienced domestic violence or assault

489 College St, Suite 503 TO, ON, M6G 1A5	T: (416) 323-9149	Monday to Friday: 9am-5pm
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South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario

Provides advice, brief services, and/or legal representation in various areas of poverty law.

45 Sheppard Ave East, Suite 106A, TO, ON, M2N 5N1	T: (416) 487-6371 F: (416) 487-6456	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday: 9:30am-12:30pm, 1pm-5pm Wednesday: 9:30am-12:30pm
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Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic

Community-based legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario which provides free legal services to low-income, non-English speaking clients from the Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian communities in Toronto.

180 Dundas Street West, Suite 1701, TO, ON, M7A 0A1	T: (416) 971-9674 F: (416) 971-6780	Monday, Thursday, Friday: 9am-5pm Tuesday: 12pm-7pm Wednesday: 1pm-5pm
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LEGAL

FCJ Refugee Centre

Offers free legal services to refugees and others at risk due to their immigration status, and welcomes anyone asking for advice, counsel and support regarding these issues.

208 Oakwood Avenue, TO, ON, M6E 2V4	T: (416) 469-9754 F: (416) 469-2670	Monday: 9:30am-5pm Thursday: 9:30am-5pm
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Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre

Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) offers assistance with immigration, family disputes, or criminal matters in the form of consultations, representation, or referrals. For the most serious legal matters, LAO may offer full representation through its certificate program.

1900 Davenport Road, TO, ON, M6N 1B7	T: (416) 656-8025	
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Parkdale Community Legal Services

Provides representation for clients in these areas: Social Assistance, Violence and Health, Immigration, Workers' Rights, and Tenants' Rights. Also, provides assistance in the area of family law, and referrals.

1266 Queen Street West, TO, ON, M6K 1L3	T: (416) 531-2411 F: (416) 531-0885	Monday: 2pm-6pm Tuesday: 2pm-7pm Thursday: 2pm-7pm Friday: 10-1pm, 2pm-5pm
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Refugee Law Office

Provides legal assistance to refugee claimants and immigrants who are eligible for legal aid..

20 Dundas Street West, Suite 202, TO, ON, M5G 2H1	T: (416) 977-8111 F: (416) 977-5567	Monday to Friday: 8am-5pm
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FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

An important component to any successful youth group (whether we like it or not) is having money and resources to get the group off the ground, and then keep it going once started. Money might be essential to pay the salary of a youth coordinator, reduce barriers (having food, tokens, etc.), and providing some honoraria to recognize youth contributions. Looking for funding to run a youth program or group can be quite a daunting task – trust us, we know! However, the good news is there are a lot of funders and organizations that are there to help you along the way. Check out some of the links below for some funders that we've had positive experiences with, and have youth-focused funding priorities and granting processes. There are also a lot of workshops and trainings to help you learn how to write grant proposals or apply for funding. It may seem like a mountain to climb right now, but with some perseverance and the right support, you can finance your project! Good luck!

Funder	Name of Grant	Goal	Link
ArtReach	ArtReach Grant Program	Aims to support meaningful engagement of Toronto youth (13-29), who have experienced and/or are experiencing exclusion from active participation in quality arts opportunities.	https://artreachgrant2015.wordpress.com/
Laidlaw Foundation	Youth-led Community Change Program	To offer funding opportunities for youth-led groups that are working to bring attention to and address concerns that they are passionate about, to their peers & communities.	http://laidlawfdh.org/funding-opportunities/youth-led-community-change-program/
Laidlaw Foundation	Pop-up Funding	To offer youth-led groups the opportunity to apply for micro-grants of up to \$500.	http://laidlawfdh.org/funding-opportunities/pop-up-funding/
Equitas: International Centre for Human Rights Education	Speaking Rights Bursary	To fund concrete projects in the community that promote youth engagement and a number of other human rights values that are highlighted in Equitas's Speaking Rights program.	https://equitas.org/en/news/latest-news/youth-are-leading-positive-change-in-their-community/
Toronto Community Housing	Youth Action Grant	To recognize and support the innovative ideas youth have to improve their communities. Funds are available to support youth-led initiatives such as summer camps, community events, workshops and training.	http://www.torontohousing.ca/fo-cusonyouth
Toronto Community Housing	Strengthening Communities Youth Leadership Project	To advance the capacity of youth living in Toronto Community Housing. Youth develop eight-to-ten-week projects focused on making a positive impact in their communities.	http://www.torontohousing.ca/fo-cusonyouth



RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our group has learned quite a bit on this journey! Through speaking with newcomer youth across Toronto, and youth workers in various organizations, we have come up a few recommendations to promote greater youth engagement:

1. Promote processes and practices within organizations that truly get youth involved in decision making. Youth engagement requires that young people have actual agency, authority and responsibility, as well as opportunities to develop the skills needed to make sound decisions. Some possible avenues for this include: getting youth involved through focus groups and community meetings; having youth on the Board of Directors; offering and involving youth in training opportunities, ongoing program development, and as staff (short-term or long-term positions). By embracing youth engagement, this benefits the youth, the organization and the community
2. Allow for shifts in thinking. Youth engagement, youth decision-making and youth-leadership are becoming popular buzzwords in the youth-serving sector. However, allow yourself to have an open-mind, and be organic and flexible through your process of understanding and applying these terms. It's important to strive to be community-informed and community-driven when we reflect on our perceptions, and modify them when necessary to ensure that youth are being given the opportunity to fully engage in the community.
3. Direct more resources for youth-decided, youth-developed programs in an accessible and inclusive way. As a way of meaningfully engaging youth, more funding needs to be streamed into programs and opportunities that respond to priorities, gaps and emerging challenges of a wide range of youth populations. As such, funding processes not only need to be youth-friendly, but should strongly value intersectionality, ensuring that they blanket a wide range of identities.
4. Commit to a journey of anti-oppression. If you want to promote a safe space, it is important to deepen your understanding of anti-racism, intersectionality and anti-oppression. What we presented here was by no means all-encompassing, but allows us to start an important dialogue. One that we strongly urge you to pick up in your own organizations.

5. Lend your voice to a collective response. As we mentioned at the beginning of our toolkit, youth engagement is a journey, and it is not enough for any of us to individually embrace a youth engagement approach. It is important to work collectively and committedly – sharing our knowledge and promising practices with other stakeholders working with youth in diverse settings.

6. Take scope of the mountain ahead and recognize that it will be no easy task to change systems and structures – especially ones that are oppressive and exclusionary. However, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't link arms, plant our feet firmly on the path and embark on a journey of change.



DREAM TEAM:

Browne
 Chinue
 Destin
 Diana
 Francois
 Maria Alejandra
 Rosa
 Switch
 Treisy
 Xavier





