

FCJ Refugee Centre

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2017-2018



What is International Women's day?

International Women's day is celebrated on the 8th of March every year. It is a day reserved for the recognition and celebration of women's rights, and the struggles they have faced throughout history, as well as social, economic, cultural and political achievements.

FCJ Refugee Centre commemorates the movement for Women's rights.



WHY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY?

At FCJ we work with women who have experienced violence, forced displacement and other traumas. At FCJ Refugee Centre every day is Women's Day because every day we are proud to support and advocate for access to services and justice. We open our doors to welcome them and to make

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

-READY TOUR AND RAD INFO-SESSIONS CALENDAR January to March 2018

-FAMILY DAY

-NEW PROJECT: MIGRANT WORKERS MOBILE CLINIC

-PRECARIOUS STATUS YOUTH PURSUING UNIVERSITY DEGREES IN 2018

-AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCISCO CO—DIRECTOR OF FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE IN TORONTO

-INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

-VOLUNTEER STORIES

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Sign in and visit a refugee hearing room.

If you are a refugee claimant, this is a unique opportunity to be better prepared for your hearing, see an actual refugee hearing room and learn what happens during the hearing.

Do you want to learn the next steps after a negative decision in a refugee hearing?

Join one of the refugee appeal info sessions. This is a FREE opportunity to be better prepared for the preparation of an appeal before the RAD. Rejected refugees will learn the steps to follow and how to document their appeal before the Refugee Appeal Division (RAD).

For registration please visit the FCJ Refugee Centre website (www.fcjrefugeecentre.org)

For more details contact Carolina Teves at cteves@fcjrefugeecentre.org

Please take a look at the calendar of the upcoming READY TOURS and APPEAL INFO SESSIONS

For registration you just have to contact Carolina Teves: cteves@fcjrefugeecentre.org

Front line workers are welcome to join the sessions with their clients.

If you need interpretation please let us know in advance.

READY TOUR AND RAD INFO-SESSIONS

CALENDAR January to March 2018



March	1	15
April	5	19
May	3	17
June	7	21

March	8	29
April	12	26
May	10	31
June	14	28

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FCJ Refugee Centre is committed to continue supporting refugees in Canada

Born in El Salvador, Francisco came to Canada in 1990 with Loly, his wife, and their two children. Soon after their arrival, their third child was born. Formally trained as a lawyer and economist, Francisco has been committed to issues of social justice for as long as he can remember. Starting with work in human rights in El Salvador, then solidarity work in Europe, and now work in the field of Refugee Rights in Canada. He is past president of the Canadian Council for Refugees, and has been recognized for his work with the William P. Hubbard Race Relations Award of the City of Toronto and the YMCA Peace Medallion. Below is the transcript of an interview with Francisco at FCJ Refugee Centre.

Q- Could you please introduce yourself?

A: My name is Francisco Rico-Martinez, Co-director of FCJ Refugee Centre in Toronto Canada. We have two co-directors in the office, one is me and the other one is Loly. What we do is try to manage the office and give direction to what the office needs Continue ...

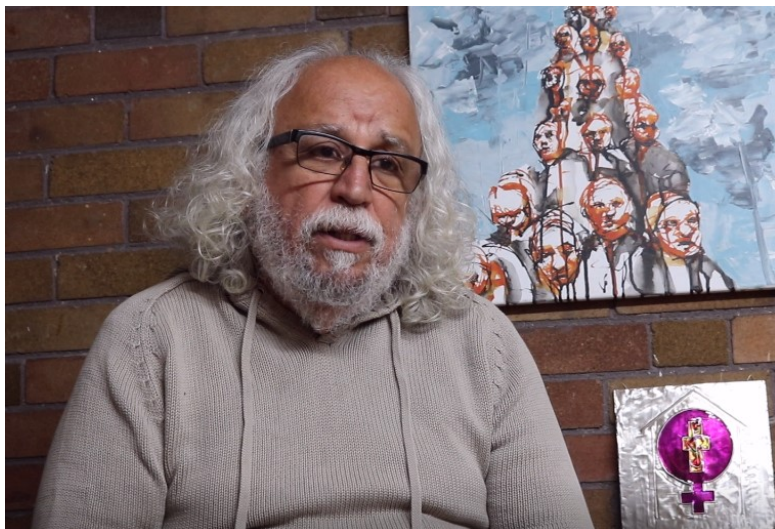
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-to do, and allocate the time and the resources. The focus is to support refugee claimants and non-status people who arrive in Canada and who want to regularize themselves here, so we have a lot of work to do.

Q- What does it mean to you, “working with uprooted people?”

A: I am one of them. For me it is not work, it is a lifestyle. I owe a lot to people who helped me at the beginning of my life, so I also want to help people in need. They are not able to do it alone, and the system is very complicated for refugees. It is a good idea that they are able to find a place

where they can relax, make a joke, release their stress, and then move forward. Here they find a place where they feel welcomed.



Q- How you do you evaluate the FCJ Refugee Centre’s work in 2017?

A: Well, 2017 was a very difficult year for FCJ Refugee Centre for two reasons. First, the financial support of the organization was not clear, making for some difficulties, but we were able to overcome them. Secondly, by the end of the year we were able to secure more resources. During 2017 many refugee claimants and non-status people arrived in Canada. The statistics of newcomers increased from almost 30,000 to more than 45,000 and the majority of them were here in Toronto. So we were not ready and we were facing a lack of resources, but we managed with the help of many volunteers, student placements, law students, and the support of many foundations, Government and the City of Toronto to keep the door open.

Q- What are FCJ’s main achievements in 2017?

A: We had three main achievements in 2017. We never said the door is closed for refugees. If someone was referred to us and we could not find a shelter in the city, we housed them here. We housed them in the best conditions, and they didn’t sleep on the street and that has been an achievement. Secondly, even with the increase of applications of immigrants and refugees with the same few staff, through volunteers and law students and our own experience, we managed to respond to everyone that came to us. The third is that we are creating more awareness about different levels of government. Continue ...

For instance, for the first time the Provincial Government opened funding for refugee claimants which they did not do before, which we think was somewhat due to our advocacy and lobbying the City MPPs. We are also receiving resources from the City in order to keep the door open to receive refugees. Additionally, we also made people aware of the situation that was happening and how we as an organization is responding to this crisis.

Q- Could you please tell me about your goal for 2018?

A: We have not one goal but many goals. One, to keep the level of operation that we are managing now. Two, to expand our work. Now we are working more and more with temporary workers, seasonal workers. We will work with survivors of trafficking with youth, women, care givers and all of those sectors. Another one is to try to improve the conditions of the houses for refugee women. We are going to request resources and try to renovate and keep the houses in good condition. The other goal is that people continue leaving the office with something in their hands.

Q- What will be the office priority for 2018?

A: The priorities are youth and women but these are linked to all other areas of our work in terms of our legal departments. Our priorities are to do as many applications as we can but also to be sensitive to the needs of women and youth and children in our houses. The other program we have is popular education. Our goal in the long term is to try to create a gender immigration Centre, focusing on gender because we don't have that in Canada.

Q- What are the challenges for the FCJ in 2018?

I think the main challenge is the self-care of staff members. We are all living with a lot of stress. People are coming and there are a lot of things to do. Staff don't have time to take care of themselves and that could damage the health of our staff. So we need to create more space for them to recover themselves. We are going to do more self-awareness training. We want to have more meetings to build the community we have.

Q- Could you please explain a case that impacted you the most?

A: The most important case for me was that with the help of the Centre we managed to open the door with York University to enable youth with precarious migration status to attend the University, paying domestic fees. Because for me it was so sad to see the wasting of the lives of young persons who couldn't continue their education. This has been one of the biggest successes that we have had so far. We are going to knock on the doors of other universities and will talk with the government of Ontario and explain [continue in the next page ...](#)

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the issue, asking them to help us to fix it.

Q-What is your message for FCJ partners and those who are working for people on the move?

A: The work we do is impossible without their support. We have very few staff. Our work is only possible if we can manage to get the support of our partners and we need them in order to continue the work that we do for refugees.

Health for all: FCJ Refugee Centre with its partners provides health care support for newcomers to Canada

By Sohaila Khaliqyar

Toronto, Canada, February, 2018 - Due to conflict, poverty and extreme weather, human rights violations, and persecution for political, religious, ethnic reasons, large numbers of people leave their countries in search of a better life in other countries.

Canada is one of the countries which welcomes a great number of refugees every year.

The refugees and immigrants may face unique challenges in seeking health care support in Canada.

A team of five dedicated doctors at FCJ Refugee Centre is providing a primary health care clinic, a mental health clinic and self-care to meet the unique health needs of marginalised populations from diverse cultural backgrounds.



Dr. Naheed is one of the health team workers at the FCJ Refugee Centre. “Over the years as I have done the work at the FCJ Refugee Centre I see refugees are getting sicker and sicker and come with more challenges. People become physically and mentally sick when they immigrate to other countries. Their mental health becomes worse. They get sad, anxious, frustrated, depressed. Said Dr. Naheed: “The clinic is very busy. Continue ...

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We see between six and ten people at each of our clinics, which are held two half days per week. We provide primary care with a focus on immigrants' health and the consequences of immigration around physical health and substance use."

FCJ Refugee Centre identifies equity and culturally competent strategies and services as critical to improving and maintaining the health of vulnerable populations. The clinic focuses on illness prevention and health promotion.

Health workers at the Centre not only provide health care support for the refugees, but they also actively advocate for the well-being of the people on the move.



Focusing on the importance of health for everyone, Dr. Naheed says that "It does not make sense to marginalize people outside of the health care system based on immigration status. We all know this. It is important to vaccinate all the children. If people are healthy they are more likely to contribute to society, so I believe that access to affordable health care for all is a human right."

It is common for refugees to experience stress, depression and physical health care needs. Additionally as more refugees arrive from countries lacking sophisticated medical care, they are not aware of the health care system in Canada. While entering the country, many refugees have an idealized image of a system that will take care of all their needs, mentally and physically. They are surprised when they learn that they are expected to pay service fees, schedule appointments, and deal with insurance options that characterize health care in the Canada. Newcomer patients must understand the system in order to express their needs and get the medical care based on the facilities available for them. Continue...



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FCJ Refugee Centre is a place to go for most of the newcomer patients, to both receive the available treatment and health care support and become aware of how they can proceed with a complex health issue by referring them to a community health centre after an initial health screening at the FCJ primary health clinic.

“At the FCJ we do have a compassionate fund through the support of the Inner City Health Associates to cover some of the tests patients need.”

“But sometimes they may need three or four tests. As a Doctor I am now stuck in a position where I need to make a judgement about which test to order. When a person has health insurance they can get all the tests they need. That is a real challenge. It is a challenge for clients first and foremost,” said Dr. Naheed.

He added “Another challenge is supporting people who are stuck in the immigration system. That is a systemic problem and a burden on people that is so hard for them to deal with. The more stressful the process, the sicker our clients are getting and they become psychologically depressed. We know physical and mental health are not separate. They are intertwined-- they are connected, so it is a huge factor in people’s overall health.”

Join our committed team as a volunteer to work for uprooted people

FCJ Refugee Centre strives to meet the diverse needs of uprooted people in communities across Ontario. FCJ Refugee Centre attempts to address the problems of poverty and lack of resources, isolation, and discrimination through community-based programs, which promote self-help, personal growth, community economic development and social justice.

If you are interested in volunteering at FCJ Refugee Centre please visit our website for more information: www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/about-us/volunteering/

By: Betty Nabukenya,

I worked on the reception, and I enjoyed interacting with different people from different backgrounds.

FCJ is a great community centre where staff members are so friendly and

welcoming. I have really gained experience in my field with the help of staff members, especially Carolina Teves who was my supervisor. She never got tired of helping me where necessary. I liked working with all the staff members at FCJ and I will surely miss them.



I finished my placement in mid-January 2018 and FCJ organised a surprise farewell get together with the staff members. I was so surprised and happy. I cut the cake and said good bye to Francisco, Diana, Carolina, Loly and other staff members. I am really grateful to work with FCJ and I will always miss them. Thanks for the training you have provided, your support during the time I worked with you and keep up the good spirit of helping newcomers and refugees in Canada.

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Celebrating Family Day with immigrants in Toronto

By FCJ Refugee Centre

Toronto, Canada, February, 2018 Family Day falls on the third Monday in February. This day has been set aside in February to celebrate and spend time with family and loved ones. “When I go to eat a slice of Pizza it brings to mind my son because it is too expensive for him



to get a slice of pizza in my country” said Liduvina, a mother of two children who works as a volunteer at the FCJ Refugee Centre. “Immigrant mothers who leave their children alone are worriers. They come to Canada with a lot of challenges and problems and they need immediate support as they are overwhelmed with frustration.” “We used to celebrate family day in my country by getting together, preparing typical food. We also listened to music and danced and enjoyed our time together,” said Liduvina. “The fundamental unit of any society is the family, biological or not. In our office we feel like a family and interact like a family.” [Continue to the next page...](#)

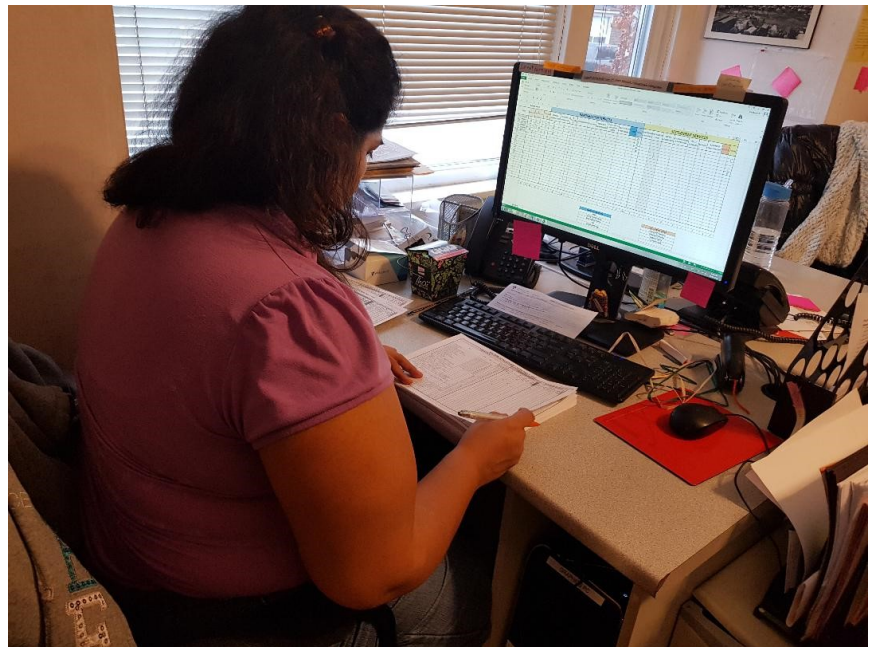
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We care for each other as members of one family, and our family keeps growing. That is why FCJ gives high priority to family integration, as all families should be united.

“However, despite not being with our loved ones there in Mexico, here we find a new family at the FCJ Refugee Centre. We will remember our loved ones because the distance and the situation that we are going through does not allow us to celebrate family day with them. We hope that soon we can be permitted to stay in this wonderful country to contribute like a grain of sand, working, learning and helping other people who come like us to this country,” said Liduvina.



Our greatest hope is that all persons who come to the FCJ Refugee Centre are provided the support that they need to integrate themselves into life in Canada and build a new home for themselves and their family. FCJ knows that this cannot be easy and that many uprooted people face many challenges before they are successful. As refugees or immigrants themselves, FCJ staff know and understand these challenges, and strive to show compassion towards any and all people who come to us. Beyond our services, we also try to provide a shoulder to lean on, an ear to listen with, a hand to help with, and a person that will stand beside the other.



NEW PROJECT: MIGRANT WORKERS MOBILE CLINIC

The FCJ Migrant Workers Mobile Clinic aims to outline the spectrum within which migrant workers are exploited, and the complexities of their unique needs and support which will reflect future policy development.

The initiatives proposed through this project will address multiple needs and gaps, including:

- ♦ **Case management:** we will offer a wide range of in-house services, including immigration support and legal information; working with partner organizations to respond to the multifaceted needs of this population.
- ♦ **Accessible services:** Although some activities will be based out of the FCJ Refugee Centre, services will be carried out mainly at sites across the GTA during flexible hours (evenings and/or weekend) and in areas with high concentrations of migrant workers.
- ♦ **Prevention:** The Migrant Centre will offer a safe space for migrant workers to share their experiences in a non-judgmental and supportive environment while providing information (immigration laws, procedures, available resources, etc.). Sharing of information and tools will prevent situations of exploitation/trafficking and assist those already experiencing exploitation.
- ♦ **Policy Improvements:** By collecting information about the instances of exploitation of migrant workers, we can inform and influence policy improvement.

For more information please visit our website at: www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/

Law student volunteer shares her story in FCJ

By Danielle Dekeyser

Toronto, Canada, February, 2018 - My name is Danielle Dekeyser and I have been a volunteer at the FCJ Refugee Centre since September 2017. I am a law student at Osgoode and was placed at the organization by Pro Bono Students Canada. I chose to volunteer at the FCJ Refugee Centre because I was very interested in exploring refugee law and interacting with clients, I wanted the opportunity to help others in some small way. Continue...



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I began my placement after hearing all summer about the refugee crisis in the Middle East, and wanted to contribute positively in some way.

Furthermore, the organization looked like an incredibly grass-roots, compassionate place where I could really get some hands-on experience. I have been at the Centre for over 4 months now and can confidently say I found even more than I imagined. In my role, I draft humanitarian and compassionate applications for refugee claimants seeking an exemption to apply for permanent residence from within Canada. Through my work I have been exposed to a number of vastly different cases and diverse groups of people. Through the entire experience, I have had the support of Jack and Diana the entire way through, who encouraged me and all the volunteers to be confident in our submissions, ask for help when needed, and seek them out if we were ever interested in learning more about refugee law. [Continue ...](#)

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This experience has been an excellent introduction to refugee law, and a great place to start my legal career. If you are ever thinking about gaining exposure to the practice of refugee law, I would highly recommend the Centre – the people are excellent, you are given a lot of autonomy, and the Centre in general is an excellent support system for refugees.

FCJ Refugee Centre strives to meet the diverse needs of uprooted people in communities across Ontario. FCJ Refugee Centre attempts to address the problems of poverty and lack of resources, isolation, and discrimination through community-based programs, which promote self-help, personal growth, community economic development and social justice.

If you are interested in volunteering at FCJ Refugee Centre you are invited to submit your resume and your volunteer application with your information to Carolina Teves:

[cteves @fcjrefugeecentre.org](mailto:cteves@fcjrefugeecentre.org)

PRECARIOUS STATUS YOUTH PURSUING UNIVERSITY DEGREES IN 2018

FCJ Refugee Centre, in partnership with York University, started the Access to Education program, which created two pathways for precarious status youth to pursue university degrees. As a result, the first group of students was accepted.

Access to Education is the first program of its kind in Canada that allows precarious status students to pursue university degrees while paying domestic fees. Over the course of nine months we created a bridging program to support youth who have been out of school for a little while to transition to university. The program, which consists of a unique and innovative course titled: Critical Approaches to Migration and Up rootedness, Continue ...



is housed in the sociology department. Upon successful completion of the course, students were able to apply directly to undergraduate programs at York. The other pathway involves direct admissions to York University for recent high school graduates. We have been working on the administrative changes needed, which include everything from how to enrol students, create a safe campus environment, provide specialized student supports, etc. The first bridging course was launched exactly one year ago. Ten students have been accepted by York University after the implementation of the Access to Education Program. [Read more](#)

WE ARE GETTING READY FOR THE GARAGE SALE IN THE SPRING!!!

Here is a chance to clear out all those things you have in your house and don't know what to do with. And you will be helping to support a great cause...!

The Centre is planning a sidewalk sale in the spring. This annual garage sale is one of the fund raising activities we have to support the Centre's programs.

We are looking for all sorts of things to sell.

We are looking for:

- Kitchen and household things: utensils, pots and pans, dishes and stuff, small appliances, etc.
- Toys and games
- Shoes
- Jewelry
- DVDs, CDs, books
- Scarves, shawls, etc.
- sewing machine - we did have two one year!
- Bikes – we had three last year!
- Craft items – beads, yarn, and knitting and crochet needles, etc....

And anything else you may want to get rid of.

You can drop things off at 208 Oakwood Avenue during the hours of 9:00 to 5:00 on weekdays or on Saturday during the day. You can also let us know if you need us to pick stuff up.



FCJ Refugee Centre



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