

# ANNUAL REPORT



# 2017



FCJ Refugee Centre  
*Walking with Uprooted People*

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## **MISSION**

FCJ Refugee Centre helps uprooted people overcome the challenges of rebuilding their lives in Canadian society. With an open door approach, the Centre offers an integrated model of refugee protection, settlement services and education, including shelter for women and their children.

## **MANDATE**

The FCJ Refugee Centre has a mandate to assist refugees and other uprooted people in re-establishing their lives and integrating into Canadian society by:

-Offering inclusive and timely counselling and support, including interpretation, referral to legal assistance, employment training, programs on Canadian culture and life, and other educational workshops

-Providing temporary shelter for women and children

## **MESSAGE OF THE CO-DIRECTORS**

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, students' placements, law students, and the support of many foundations, Government and the City of Toronto to keep the door open.

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 don'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. 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 is happening and how we as an organization are responding to this crisis.

One of our goals for next year is to keep the level of operation that we are managing now. Another one is 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.

Our 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.

One of the most important success during 2017 was that we managed to open the door with York University to enable youth with precarious migration status to attend the University, paying domestic fees. 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 the issue, asking them to help us to fix it.

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.



### **Sharing a volunteer's experience:**

Volunteering at FCJ Refugee Centre has been an illuminating experience that has broadened my understanding of my responsibilities as a citizen of a global community.

FCJ Refugee Centre is a supportive and familial community for volunteers to develop their own abilities in their respective disciplines. As a law student, I learned how to communicate effectively with clients, balance multiple cases at the same time, be an assertive oral advocate for those in need, and complete extensive research and written advocacy. I also have had the opportunity to learn office skills before I enter the workforce, which will be tremendously helpful in the future. The community of volunteers and displaced persons is one that fosters friendship, solidarity, respect and inclusion. I have no hesitation in recommending others to volunteer at such a wonderful place.

Curtis Sell



## SETTLEMENT PROGRAM



FCJ Refugee Centre continues to welcome refugee and newcomer women from many parts of the world, including Nigeria, Liberia, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, India, Angola, Republic of Cameroon, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Hungary, Barbados, Bahamas, Brazil, Korea, Mexico, Azerbaijan and Iran. Within the last year our 3 transitional houses have housed, 45 women of which 4 were pregnant and 25 children.

Out of these cases we have had 11 successful refugee claims and 2 successful Humanitarian and Compassionate Grounds applications. The remaining residents are awaiting hearing dates; we strive to assist them by providing as many resources as we are able to, one of which is our FCJ Women's Network. This is where the women from our houses and the newcomer community come together to talk about issues they face, are taught about life skills through workshops, teach each other about their own cultures and craft workshops.



### ALL WOMEN COUNT: WORKSHOPS FOR NEWCOMER WOMEN

FCJ Refugee Centre implemented a series of workshops focused on topics/information that women can apply in their daily life: Health and self-care, recreation, housing, beauty tips, jewelry making, facilitation skills and more. The workshops were possible thanks to the support of the Catherine Donnelly Foundation.



### PRIMARY CARE CLINIC

During 2017 FCJ Centre's Primary Health Care Clinic continued open their door on Wednesdays (9:30am to 12pm) and Saturdays (9am to 1pm) by appointment. During the year doctors at the clinic were able to take between 5 to 7 patients every time it is open, each appointment takes around 30 minutes. On Saturdays, the clinic also receives family groups with about 3 or 4 members, with longer appointments of approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

## SETTLEMENT PROGRAM

### FCJ YOUTH NETWORK AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The FCJ Youth Network has been busy as ever in 2017-2018! We have greeted many new members and we have seen some old friends move to new adventures.

In August 2017 we had a going away party for our beloved youth coordinator, Philip Ackerman, as he moved to a new position at Seneca College. While Philip no longer works at FCJ Refugee Centre, he continues to be actively involved with the youth and facilitates the youth group's Wednesday meetings nearly every week. We have had to adjust to the change, but the youth group is always adaptable.

In August we also took our yearly trip to Sanctuary North, where 12 youth got to share in the wonderful new experience. We canoed, swam, built bon fires, played games and even completed a scavenger hunt. For three days, the youth who came were cell-phone and wifi-free while they enjoyed the healing elements of the cottage and its natural surroundings. New friends were made as new adventures were shared.

In September, we had a ground-breaking Canadian first, as students with precarious immigration status were admitted to York University. Thanks to the generous funding from the City of Toronto Community Legacy Initiative, FCJ Refugee Centre was able to partner with York University to create pathways for admission for students who had previously been prevented from studying due to their immigration status. One of the pathways developed consisted of a bridging class on Critical Theories of Migration and Uprootedness, based in the Sociology department, which supported students to demonstrate their academic potential. The bridging class was run in the winter, summer and fall semesters and saw 27 students successfully complete the class, and six transition

to undergraduate programs, with six more having applied for next fall. The other pathway involved admission directly into undergraduate programs for recent high school grads with the academic credentials. Six students were admitted in September with fourteen more having applied for next fall. The excitement among the students who always believed post-secondary education was beyond their reach has been inspiring.

In November we once again began our yearly fundraiser in the Christmas tree lot at Ikea North York. For one month FCJ youth and staff worked in the lot, helping customers choose Christmas trees and raising awareness about the Centre. Seven youth were assigned leadership roles as shift leaders, where they demonstrated their responsibility and commitment. Many other youth also gave their time and energy as dedicated volunteers. As a recognition of the hard work, the youth were treated to a bowling night a few months later.

Finally, the youth continue to raise awareness of the challenges they face and the stereotypes they encounter. This year the youth developed a project called the Same Difference, with the support of OCASI and Equitas. Several youth were involved in the writing of a poem that was meant to address stereotypes that impact newcomer youth, and how to counter some of these negative impacts. The poem was then performed and filmed by members of the youth group. The video that was produced as a result was conceived and edited by other members of the group. The result is a powerful and moving expression of the youth's experience and a tool to break stereotypes and negative preconceptions that leave youth feeling othered and excluded. The youth then used the video to run workshops at Seneca College and at Equitas.

## Immigration Help and Refugee Protection

2017 has been a year in which we saw an increase in refugees crossing the border from the United States. This was the result of the Trump administration imposing bans against travelers from Muslim countries and later ending DACA (DREAMERS PROGRAM) in September, followed by cancelling a temporary residency permit program that has allowed almost 60,000 citizens from Haiti to live and work in the United States. Due to the Safe Third Country agreement, some refugees were pushed to take drastic measures like crossing at irregular points of entry causing in one case, a Ghanaian refugee grave injuries and a woman her life. During the months of summer, around 5,712 refugees claimants entered through Quebec, with a total of 15,000 crossing during 2017. At the end of that year, around 47,000 (IRB) claims were pending, with an average waiting time of 16 months rather than 60 days.

Many of these claimants moved to Toronto from Quebec, putting our staff and resources under a lot of pressure. This is because they have arrived to our Centre with a document from immigration asking them to present themselves with the claimants forms, except the basis of claim, and most of the time the deadline was very short. Another issue our Centre faced was a result of an increase in rejections from Legal Aid Ontario because of their lack of funding. Not only that, our staff must work long hours constantly contacting them as they struggle managing the volume of calls.

One case among many, showed us how our programs and efforts really made a difference. A rejected refugee claimant from Eritrea, whose Humanitarian application was approved back in 2015 was waiting to be landed when she encountered a problem with her passport's renewal. Without this document, she was facing delays and years of frustration due to her forced separation from her children and husband. After many attempts to get her

passport, our office decided to write to immigration asking for an exemption to be landed without the renewal, and just her birth certificate. Finally, she got her PR in October and around Christmas we started her family's sponsorship application.

Another vital service our centre offers is supporting clients with appeals to the Refugee Appeal Division and doing submissions for Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRRA). Most of the clients we are serving these days are rejected Refugees claimants from the Backlog. Many of the claimants have been waiting for 3 or 4 years to be heard by the Refugee Protection Division. Some of these cases are families that fortunately are working, but unable to pay the fees for a lawyer.

During 2017 we hosted a total of 8 placement students from various Ontario Colleges and 6 Pro Bono Students from Osgood Law School – York University and 35 volunteers through different periods of the year. Without their support and dedication, many of our programs wouldn't be possible, such as successful Humanitarian and Compassionate applications, Appeal, sponsorship applications, work permits, Permanent residence for protected persons, housing and referrals.

### NEWCOMER SETTLEMENT PROGRAM

Since its establishment, the FCJ Refugee Centre has provide support to vulnerable newcomers to Canada including refugee claimants, refugees, non-status persons, etc. Assisting precarious migrants has become a challenge over the years mainly due to lack of proper funding to allow for holistic wrap around supports to those populations. However, for a third consecutive year the Newcomer Settlement Program funding by the Ontario Government provided us with the opportunity to focus more efforts on our most vulnerable clients. Our clients have additional



## Immigration Help and Refugee Protection

vulnerabilities determined by multiple intersecting identities such as age, immigration status, family, language among others. Through this funding, although limited, we are able to assist approximately a hundred new vulnerable clients, such as single youth mothers with precarious immigration status, a year. In addition, monthly information sessions on Humanitarian and Compassionate and other applications are available for interested clients.

### ANTI –HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROGRAM

FCJ Refugee Centre continues to support internationally trafficked persons through their journey to recovery as well as to facilitate the Toronto Counter Human Trafficking Network. The Centre is also actively delivering trainings to service providers to share our experience in working with trafficked persons as well as promising practices and current trends.

We built on our existing anti-trafficking work to develop a Migrant Workers Mobile Centre, with three main goals: 1) prevent instances of labour exploitation/trafficking by informing migrant workers about labour and immigration laws, policies and available community supports; 2) identify at-risk or potential labour trafficking/exploitation cases with the support of peers, and offer holistic case management support services; 3) collect information about the extent of labour trafficking/exploitation, as well as the complex experiences of migrant workers exploited within the spectrum.

We have reached out to the organizations which previously agreed to support us with the project, particularly in the service provision part. We have begun collaborating with other organizations such as the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, the Anglican Church, Durham area coalition and Community Development Council Durham, and faith-based NGOs. We are also in discussions with those employers who are complying with the relevant legislation to partner with them and identify joint action points - for example, a Mennonite farmer who already is collaborating with us . We are ready to implement this project on 2018 .



Anti-Human Trafficking forum

### A second home

In light of recent troubling developments in the world and the rising anti-refugee sentiment, the work done by organizations like the FCJ Refugee Centre is more important than ever. I have been privileged to be a part of this organization this summer and could not imagine a more rewarding experience. Having once been a refugee claimant myself, I can understand and relate to the challenges that many refugees face every day. It was at FCJ Centre that I was able to translate this empathy into real work. I was touched deeply by the stories of people who bravely shared them with me, by their resilience in the face of adversity, and by their ability to thrive in spite of it. FCJ Centre became my second home, where I made important friendships. We shared our clients' hopes and fears, worked together, had meals together, and even danced together. These connections and the importance of work done here will keep me coming back to FCJ for years to come. Thank you for everything.

Rauf Azimov

## POPULAR EDUCATION PROGRAM



The Relearning Refugee Protection Program was successfully implemented during 2017 allowing FCJ Refugee Centre to provide a holistic service, ensuring access to justice for precarious migrants within new and emerging areas of immigration and the refugee protection program. We specially thank Law Foundation's Access to Justice Fund because they have been supporting a lot of the work that FCJ Refugee Centre does through the Popular Education Program. The trainings we provide to agencies and communities are part of THE RELEARNING REFUGEE PROTECTION PROGRAM. For many years the Law Foundation has been supporting our workshops, presentations and informative sessions.

Through 2017 we provided 51 workshops in total. Each training was adapted to meet the needs of the agency/community we were serving. We kept promoting them through our networks and through the events we were involved in, distributing promotional material. The presentations were focused on immigration trends, new scenarios with the increasing number of refugees arriving to Canada, procedures at the border, updates on the backlog and legacy cases, and resources and services for vulnerable populations. Other topics that were also included in the trainings were family reunification, alternatives for survivors of human trafficking, immigration options for victims of domestic violence, criminalization of precarious migrant youth and the new guidelines of the Immigration and Refugee Board on "Proceedings before the IRB involving sexual orientation and gender identity and expression".

Refugee houses, shelters in Toronto and other agencies in the GTA that work directly with refugees and other precarious migrants benefitted from the series of trainings we provided. Some of these are Seaton House, COSTI, Central Intake, the Immigrant and Refugee Housing Committee, Toronto Hostels Training Centre, the Centre For Diverse Women & Families in Mississauga and HMC (Halton Multicultural Council), Connections in Oakville.

### Ready Tours and RAD info sessions

During 2017 there were 27 Ready tours in total followed by 27 short RAD info sessions. According to the program we kept doing the Ready Tours twice a month: first and third Thursday of every month and the RAD info session every time it is needed. Depending on the number of participants the groups were divided into two.

The claimants on the tour were referred by the refugee houses, shelters, online registrations, lawyers, friends/relatives and RPD. Organizations that usually refer refugee claimants: Covenant House, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services, Red Cross, Sojourn House, Women Residence, Sojourn house, Matthew house, O'Neill Program, Seaton House, Silas Hill Home for Refugees, Christie Refugee Welcome Centre, etc. At the end of the year we started to work very close with COSTI Immigrant Services and Hostel Services, Quality Suites to organize ready tours for refugee claimants staying at their locations





## THANK YOU !

Thank you to the generous support of foundations, businesses, religious groups and churches, government agencies, community groups, labour unions, and individuals. The work that FCJ Refugee Centre does is thanks to your support ! We are grateful to our current and recent donors. We wish to thank and acknowledge you, including those who wish to remain anonymous, for joining us on our journey to improve the lives of newly arrived immigrants and their families.

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Women's Inter-Church Committee

**Special thanks to all our  
team volunteers and  
placement students who are  
constantly supporting us in  
our daily work**



**MAKING A DONATION TO FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE IS  
EASIER THAN EVER!**

You can make a donation to the FCJ Refugee Centre through CanadaHelps.org, a secure online donation system. Simply go to CanadaHelps.org and type FCJ Refugee Centre in "search" Click on the "Donate Now" button on our website located at [www.fcjrefugeecentre.org](http://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org)

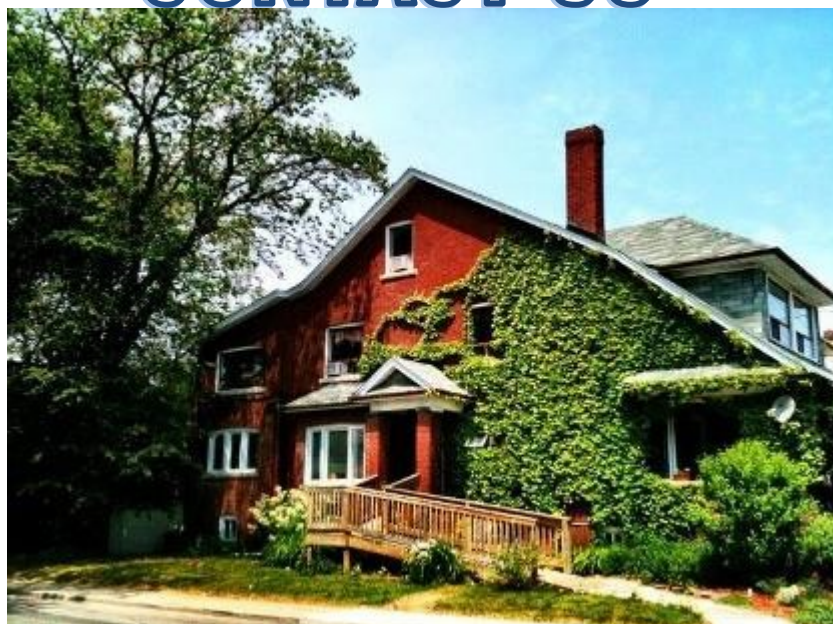
## FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE

## STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND NET ASSETS (DEFICIT)

YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2017

	2017	2016
Revenues		
Donations		
Individual donations (note 10)	\$ 25,563	\$ 24,129
Religious organizations (note 6)	141,585	129,300
Foundations	112,850	146,222
Government grants		
Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade	40,913	24,087
Other	326,540	317,747
Rent	67,167	64,770
Other	15,861	15,806
	730,479	722,061
Expenses		
Legal program	129,990	134,524
Popular education	94,669	70,874
Settlement program	272,904	248,167
Development and fundraising	40,053	70,146
Administration	221,413	226,763
	759,029	750,474
Deficiency of revenues over expenses for the year	(28,550)	(28,413)
Net assets - at beginning of year	10,822	39,235
Net assets (deficit) - at end of year	\$ (17,728)	\$ 10,822

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