

FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE

Summer Newsletter 2024



Get ready for the FCJ Refugee Centre's
annual fundraising event,
Ride for Refuge!



Join Us for Our Biggest Fundraising Event of the Year!

Ride for Refuge 2024

This community event brings together FCJ Refugee Centre supporters to raise funds and participate in a meaningful experience. Whether you choose to join our symbolic ride or walk, we invite you to come out and be part of this wonderful event on October 5th.

Take this opportunity to make a difference by creating your own fundraising team! Here's how it works:

- **Create Your Own Team:** Start raising funds with your own team and invite others to join you.
- **Stay Connected:** Follow us on social media for all the latest updates. Share our team's fundraising posts and help spread the word.
- **Use Our Hashtags:** Show your support by using the hashtags #FCJRefugeeCentreRide2024 and #Ride24 in your posts.
- **Access Resources:** For pictures, logos, and other resources, visit [Ride for Refuge](#) and download everything you need to share on your social media.

Fundraiser Perks:

- **Exclusive Ride T-shirt:** It's a RIDE Tradition! Every year, we offer an exclusive Ride for Refuge t-shirt as a thank you for raising a modest minimum. All you need to do is raise \$150 for adults (18+) or \$75 for youth (17 and under). You can pick up your t-shirt on RIDE day, while supplies last.
- **The Fast and the Furious... Fundraisers!** Rev up your fundraising because the first 100 participants who raise \$500 will win a super-plush, one-of-a-kind limited edition RIDE-branded hooded sweatshirt.
- **Top Fundraiser Features:** We will be featuring top fundraisers in our newsletter and on social media, so this is your chance to shine!

Find more information on how to register and support the FCJ Refugee Centre in our website:
fcjrefugeecentre.org/rideforrefuge2024



Undocumented Residents Day: Celebrating Contributions and Advocating for Change

August 24th is now officially Undocumented Residents Day in Toronto, after being proclaimed at City Hall by Toronto Deputy Mayor Ausma Malik, in a moving event hosted in partnership with FCJ Refugee Centre and Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI).

This important event celebrated Toronto's status as a Sanctuary City and advocated for the rights of precarious migrants living in the city. As a Sanctuary City, Toronto ensures that all residents, regardless of their legal status, have access to services without the fear of being asked to provide documentation or prove their immigration status.

The event featured a powerful panel discussion with experts who have long been advocating for the rights of precarious migrants. The panel included Loly Rico, Founder of the FCJ Refugee Centre; Syed Hussan, Executive Director of the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change; and Denise Andrea Campbell, the executive director of the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division at the City of Toronto.

The panel was moderated by Debbie Douglas, Executive Director of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI). The discussion centered on how provincial and federal governments can better support precarious migrants and the urgent need to create pathways for their immigration status.

In a special episode of our podcast, *Borderless Voices*, Loly Rico emphasized the importance of recognizing the contributions of undocumented residents to Toronto, and the need for a regularization program. Here's what she had to say:

"Today, the City of Toronto will proclaim Undocumented Residents Day to recognize the contributions of undocumented people in Toronto. This is an activity in partnership with OCASI and the FCJ Refugee Centre, and we will highlight the contributions that undocumented residents have made to the city of Toronto, as well as the challenges they face. Many of them are living underground because they are afraid of being deported. They also face a lot of racism and discrimination because they don't have documents. However, they are still part of this multiracial city, a city recognized around the world as cosmopolitan. We need to acknowledge their contributions, not just as workers, but as members of our community. They are our neighbors, and they are also people who work for us."



Loly also used the day as a call to action, urging the Government of Canada to implement a broad regularization program: “Undocumented people deserve to feel they belong here, that Canada is their home. They need the legal documents that allow them to start their new life. We are using this opportunity to call on the government to emphasize the need for a broad regularization program—not just a sectoral program. This should include anyone, such as it’s a single mom with no status raising her Canadian children and working to ensure they have a roof over their heads. As human beings, they deserve to be in Canada because they belong here,” she said.

As the day concluded, Loly reminded us of the rising anti-immigrant sentiment across the country and the responsibility of politicians and community leaders to stand against hate and racism.

Undocumented Residents Day serves as a reminder of the invaluable contributions of undocumented residents and the continued need for systemic change to ensure that all residents feel safe, valued, and at home in Canada.

Art For Everyone, Status For All: Art Show & Benefit

We are thrilled to share the success of the Art For Everyone, Status For All event fundraiser, which brought together a vibrant community of artists, supporters, and neighbors. This two-day art show and benefit showcased extraordinary works by over 20 talented artists from various countries, including refugees and supporting volunteers.

The event featured a wide range of creative expressions, from paintings and drawings to sculptures, poems, and live music performances. The atmosphere was lively, with incredible participation from the community, making the event a truly memorable experience.

A special thank you to John Gross, Susan Chernin, our wonderful neighbors, the York Heritage Quilters Guild, and the Marvellous Madison Makers for their invaluable support.

We are also grateful to Canada Heritage for funding this event and helping make it possible.



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Street Party: Diverse Residents, One Community

This summer we celebrated the FCJ Refugee Centre's annual Street Party, which brought the neighborhood together in a joyful celebration of community on June 15.

Families enjoyed a lively day filled with activities for children, games, delicious food, vibrant music, and live performances. Piñatas and other fun surprises made the event even more memorable. Held right outside the Centre's office at 208 Oakwood Ave., Toronto, the street party was a true testament to the spirit of unity and diversity.



Understanding Access to Education Challenges for Newcomer Children and Youth

The FCJ Refugee Centre has released a report titled *A Rocky Path: Understanding Access to Education Challenges for Newcomer Children & Youth*, presented by the FCJ Youth Network. This report aims to set the stage for ongoing advocacy and dialogue to improve educational access for newcomer children and youth.

The report is divided into two phases:

Phase 1: Assesses the current state of the education system.

Phase 2: Provides updates on the implementation of the report's recommendations.

Currently in its second phase, the report reveals significant challenges within Ontario's education system, including language barriers, insufficient resources, and limited technological literacy, which impede families' access to vital information. Despite the availability of educational programs, many students still struggle to receive the necessary academic support, highlighting the ongoing issue of equitable participation.



Expanding Access and opportunities for Youth

The FCJ Refugee Centre continues to make strides in creating educational opportunities for those with precarious immigration status through its Sanctuary Scholars, Uprooted U, and Uprooted Jr. programs. Here are some highlights from the programs.

Sanctuary Scholars

This initiative offers vital academic support to students with precarious immigration status. Exciting updates are coming to the Bridging Program stream. The upcoming academic course will be offered in two halves: one at York University and the other at Toronto Metropolitan University. This dual-campus experience will allow Sanctuary Scholars to explore both institutions as they plan their academic futures.

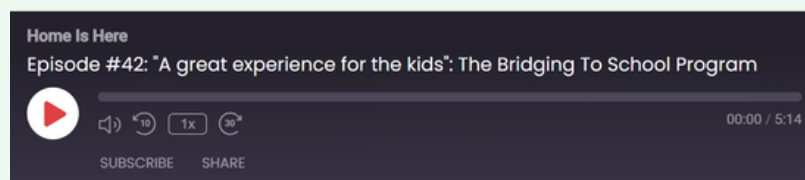
Uprooted U

Through a combination of report analysis and community feedback, it became clear that access to programs at the collegiate level is a top priority. In response, we are thrilled to announce the launch of Uprooted U—a year-long program featuring four semesters of three months each, starting in October 2024. Uprooted U will cover various topics aimed at expanding post-secondary access for individuals with precarious immigration status. This program reflects our ongoing commitment to ensuring that these individuals have pathways to higher education.

Uprooted Jr.

This past academic year, Uprooted Jr. provided a series of group and private music lessons for children aged 6-12 through our partnership with MusicBox, Toronto Chapter. The program also ran private lessons throughout the summer, along with our annual summer art and book club, supported by dedicated volunteers from July to August. In addition, we launched the Bridging To School program, addressing emerging issues related to precarious status and school enrollment. The program offered a condensed curriculum, attended by children once a week, as the Centre advocated for their rightful enrollment in school, ensuring they didn't miss out on their education while waiting for the formal education system to act on legislation.

As we continue to walk alongside uprooted people, we remain dedicated to ensuring that no one is left behind in their educational journey.



Sanctuary North Trip

Recently, the Centre organized two trips: one for the women's program and one for the Youth Network. These trips involved a three-day visit to Sanctuary North, a peaceful and safe place where participants enjoyed the beauty of nature and created lasting memories together.



Garage Sale

A huge thank you to Susan, Anna, and our Crang/Glenhurst/Appleton neighbors for your generous participation in the FCJ Youth Network's annual fundraising garage sale! With a fantastic variety of donated items, including kitchenware, vintage clothing, toys, books, rugs, and art, the event was a wonderful success, raising funds to support newcomer youth.

Stay tuned for next year's garage sale, where we'll have even more fun and unique items. We look forward to continuing our community partnerships—there's true power in solidarity!



Summer Students Testimonials

Niah Vardy

“As a law student who hopes to practice refugee law in the future, I went into this summer eager to gain relevant experience in refugee law. I chose to do a placement at the FCJ Refugee Centre because, I had heard that the FCJ Refugee Centre was a mainstay for refugee support services in Toronto. I was interested in contributing to the Centre’s legal services side while gaining exposure to their integrated and multifaceted service delivery.

“I had an amazing experience at this placement. The FCJ Refugee Centre’s community-oriented, inclusive and welcoming culture fosters a supportive and friendly work atmosphere. I learned as much from conversations with other staff and volunteers as I did from substantive tasks, as each possessed a wealth of knowledge and experience that cannot be learned from textbooks and legal databases.

“Over the course of the summer, I gained exposure to a broad range of application categories, including refugee and protected persons applications, H&Cs, deferral of removal requests, and appeals. The work I did on these applications was incredibly varied, as I had opportunities to interview clients, draft submissions and affidavits, and conduct legal research.

“This placement reaffirmed my motivation to practice refugee law and expanded my knowledge of what it is like to practice law in this area. I wholeheartedly recommend pursuing a placement at the FCJ Refugee Centre to any students who hope to work in this field.”



Niah Vardy (left) and Denise Zhu, Placement Students at the FCJ Refugee Centre

Francisco's Dream Room


On the third anniversary of the passing of our beloved Co-Director Francisco Rico-Martínez, we gathered to remember him and his extraordinary legacy, and we officially inaugurated the FCJ Refugee Centre's new room, called, in his honour, "Francisco's Dream Room."

In Francisco's own words, "I am just a dreamer that, since that time of arrival, keep looking for soulmates to make it possible."





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