

FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE FALL NEWSLETTER 2024



- **Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign**
- **'In A Nutshell': Our New Video Series**
- **The Migrant Women's Alliance**
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FCJ Refugee Centre's First Winter Fundraising Party

Our Co-Executive Director Tsering Lhamo gives us an insight into the upcoming Winter Fundraising Party on December 6 and explains how it will support our core program.

FCJ Refugee Centre's First Winter Fundraising Party



Tsering Lhamo, FCJ Refugee Centre's Co-Executive Director, at the centre's office.
Photo: FCJ Refugee Centre

On December 6, 2024, the FCJ Refugee Centre is hosting its first Winter Fundraising Party, an event that will bring together our community of staff, volunteers, board members, long-time supporters, and neighbors. The event is not just about raising money; it's about building a stronger, more sustainable future for refugees and newcomers in Canada. "All proceeds from this event will go towards the Loly and Francisco Rico Endowment Fund, which is crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability of our work, especially in uncertain times," says Tsering Lhamo, Co-Executive Director of the FCJ Refugee Centre.

The endowment fund will serve as a financial resource to help sustain the Centre's core programs, which support refugees, immigrants, and other vulnerable communities. "By growing this fund, we will be in a better position to respond to community needs, support our core programs, and manage financial fluctuations in our sector," says Tsering.

The work of the FCJ Refugee Centre is diverse. Some of the Centre's core programs include transitional housing, legal assistance for refugees navigating immigration challenges, anti-human trafficking programs, and capacity building for newcomers. Currently, FCJ Refugee Centre have four houses and are providing housing for around 30 to 35 individuals. "Our transitional housing program provides temporary shelter for newly arrived refugees, especially single women and single mothers," says Tsering.

FCJ Refugee Centre has a protection and immigration program that helps clients with the legal challenges they face, including finding lawyers and filing claims when they are unable to afford legal fees. The Centre has constantly adapted to the evolving needs of the people it serves. As Tsering recalls, FCJ was one of the few organizations that remained open for the majority of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FCJ Refugee Centre has been vocal in advocating for better shelter options for refugees, especially as the housing crisis in Canada has worsened in recent years. “The lack of shelter space for refugees has been a major challenge in the last two years, and we have responded to the needs of the time and advocated. We’ve seen some positive changes now, and we continue to push for more resources for the needs of newcomers,” says Tsering. But employment is still a major barrier for many of the newcomers.

In addition to financial donations, there are many ways for community members to contribute to FCJ Refugee Centre’s mission. Volunteers, helping with event organization, and monthly donors play a vital role in supporting the Centre’s work year-round.

Tsering believes that every newcomer has a unique strength and resilience that they bring to their new communities, not only through cultural diversity but also in terms of economic contributions to the workforce. “Canada is so diverse, which is something to be celebrated. Refugees also fill the important gaps in the workforce, and they play a role in building a strong and close-knit society.”

The fundraising event will take place from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at the Centre for Social Innovation, located at 720 Bathurst St, Toronto, ON M5S 2R4. Join us and enjoy live music, delicious food, dance performances, exciting raffles, and the chance to build connections with others who share your passion for making a difference.

Ticket Options

General Admission \$75.00

Ideal for supporters who want to contribute to the cause and enjoy the event. - What's Included in Your Ticket: 🍷 1 complimentary drink per person. 🍴 Delicious finger foods. 🧡 A donation from your ticket to support FCJ Refugee Centre’s core programs. 🌟 An opportunity to mingle with like-minded individuals passionate about the cause.

Community Support \$150.00

Designed for donors who want to support two community members (including clients, staff, and volunteers) by covering their ticket costs. The Support Ticket, if purchased, will be used by others, not by the buyer

To purchase your ticket please follow the link

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-CA/ticketing/e547201c-c017-4619-bc8d-132c29be791a>

FCJ Refugee Centre Celebrates Ontario Trillium Foundation Support

On November 22nd, the FCJ Refugee Centre is hosting an event at the Centre to express appreciation for the Ontario Trillium Foundation Capital Grant support.

With the OTF's Capital Grant, the Centre was able to address community needs by designing a versatile space that serves as both a community hub and an expanded office to accommodate the growing number of clients.

We have been able to establish a space that functions as a central meeting room, a venue for small events, and a place to deliver services to our clients. The new meeting room, named in honor of our beloved co-founder Francisco Rico-Martinez, offers a dedicated area for staff, community members, and program participants to come together for meetings, workshops, and other essential activities. Furthermore, the addition of the pantry strengthens our Food Security program, providing essential storage for non-perishable goods and ensuring reliable food support for those we serve.

"The Ontario Trillium Foundation grants have made a significant impact on our programs," adds Loly Rico, FCJ Refugee Centre Founder.

The FCJ Refugee Centre has been supporting the community for over 30 years. What began as a house providing refuge for women and children escaping violence has grown into a non-profit organization that now supports refugees and precarious migrants.

Ontario
Trillium Foundation



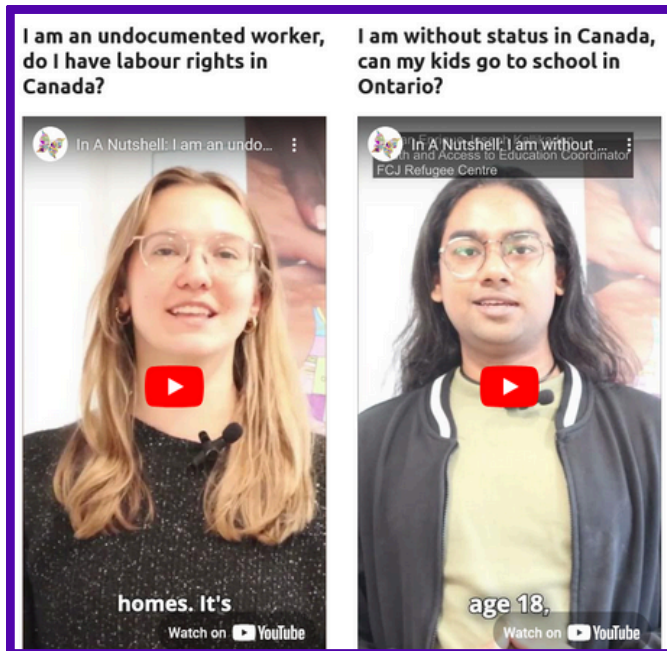
Fondation Trillium
de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



'In A Nutshell'

Clear Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions by Newcomers to Canada



In A Nutshell is an online video series designed to provide clear, direct, and accurate answers to the most frequently asked questions by newcomers to Canada. This series focuses on combating the growing misinformation surrounding refugee and immigration issues found on the internet. Through these short, engaging videos—shared across all our social media platforms—we aim to deliver specific, reliable, and concise answers while also highlighting key topics from our programs.

[Click to see the videos »](#)



RIDE FOR REFUGE.

One more year, the Centre gave it all for Ride for Refuge, both in the weeks leading up to the event and at the event itself - and the weather was great!



OUR ANNUAL RETREAT

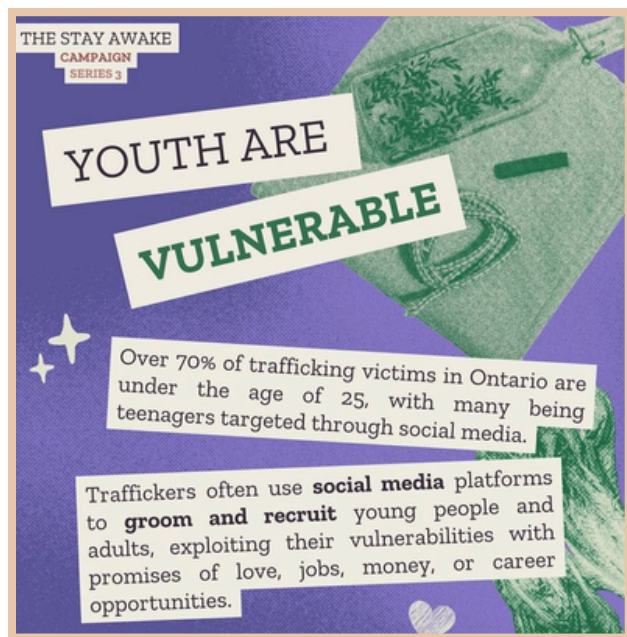
served as a much-needed time to take a break from daily activity and reflect together on our work and on what it means, both to the people we serve and to ourselves.

Stay Awake Campaign

Throughout October, FCJ Youth Alliance Against Human Trafficking conducted its Anti-Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign, targeting youth across Ontario with impactful, short video content on platforms like Instagram. Recognizing the popularity of concise video formats, we adapted this year's Stay Awake campaign to better engage our digital audience by focusing on quick, informative clips that highlight crucial themes.

Each week focused on key topics, from understanding trafficking basics to recognizing signs, debunking myths, and exposing traffickers' tactics. Interactive videos encouraged viewers to recognize red flags like isolation and lack of control over personal documents, while our *Myths vs. Facts* series addressed common misconceptions. We also illustrated how traffickers exploit through online grooming, false job offers, and manipulation, ensuring each video provided the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (1-833-900-1010) and encouraged viewers to share for broader reach.

This campaign was made possible with the invaluable support of youth from the FCJ Youth Network, including some with lived experiences of trafficking or who are at risk. Their insights were instrumental in shaping our message and approach, making the campaign especially relevant and impactful. We are actively evaluating this year's efforts and inviting feedback to enhance next year's outreach. The success of short-format videos has shown their effectiveness in spreading awareness, allowing us to engage more people meaningfully. Through this adapted approach, FCJ Refugee Centre has empowered Ontario's youth to recognize and prevent trafficking, reinforcing our commitment to safeguarding vulnerable communities.



[Click here to see the Stay Awake Campaign 2024 »](#)

The Migrant Women's Alliance

With the support of Women and Gender Equality Canada and in collaboration with Aura Freedom and Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, the FCJ Refugee Centre published a policy paper titled *Ensuring Equity - Advancing immigration pathways for women with lived experience of gender-based violence and human trafficking.*

Drawing from the work of the Migrant Women's Alliance at FCJ Refugee Centre, the paper outlines structural barriers faced by migrant women on account of their precarious immigration status, including spousal sponsorship dependence and limited pathways to permanent residence for migrant workers and caregivers. It analyzes existing immigration recourses to gender base violence as well as human trafficking, and it calls for a broad, gender-responsive and rights-based regularization scheme to ensure that women with precarious immigration status are not left behind.



Workshops organized by the Migrant Women's Alliance

Furthermore, we continued to promote community building and foster resilience through our women's programming. In June and July 2024, FCJ Refugee Centre's Founder Loly Rico hosted a welcoming embroidery series for newcomer migrant women and gender-diverse people, *Healing Hands: Embroidery and Conversations with Loly.* These sessions offered a space to learn, create and connect with others in a nurturing atmosphere. We gathered together to stitch our hopes, share experiences and build bonds through the art of embroidery.

Throughout the summer, we hosted an exciting, peer-led creative workshop series: *Mindful Creations,* which provided the perfect opportunity for migrant women and gender-diverse people to explore their artistic side in a supportive and inspiring environment. From abstract art and creating writing to fabric painting, we made this summer an artsy one!

From September 2024 until the weather permits, we're bringing together migrant women and gender diverse people for a fun movement experience: *Joyful Flow, Dance and Yoga Fusion with Shanty.* Blending a fusion of yoga, zumba, aerobics, relaxation and dance, Shanty harnesses the power of movement to help people be present and free themselves, guiding her students through mindful and joyful dance experiences.

Finally, in November 2024, we're launching *Creative Threads: An Art Collective for Newcomer Women*. During these sessions, we'll explore traditional and contemporary craft techniques, providing a creative space to learn, relax, and connect. Activities will include traditional yo-yo quilting, DIY fabric projects to spark creativity in sustainable fashion and decorative accents, eggshell mosaic art, and other eco-friendly mixed media techniques.

Youth Network

FCJ Youth Network Leadership Team.- After a significant increase in the number of members of the FCJ Youth Network, presently being 140 active members with a weekly attendance of 25-30 youth; there have been a few folks that have been actively involved in several initiatives of the group and that focus on reinforcing the Brave Space of the network. We are happy to announce that we are in the process of a transition to complete youth leadership with youth staff mentoring. The FCJYN Leadership team will be responsible for the weekly activities, the initiatives the group takes on and champions, and the areas that the group invests time and advocacy into.



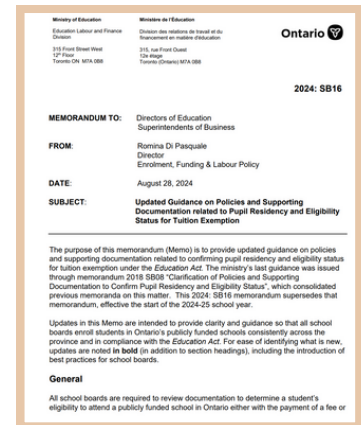
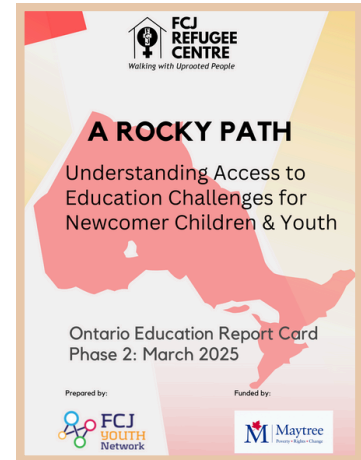
FCJYN Activities.- We had an interactive session with Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence (CWICE) that went over the following: who/what is CWICE; what is the welfare system; how do people end up in/use the system; if some of the youth have circumstances that need intervention, how do they navigate the system. We also had our annual pumpkin carving activity at the October Family Dinner and learned more about some cultural celebration around that time of the year - Halloween, Día de los Muertos.

Access To Education

We are currently working on Phase 2 of the FCJ Ontario Education Report Card that will be a review of implementation of the many suggested areas of improvement in the Phase 1 Report Card. If you are a newcomer and have had an experience with the Ontario Education System in the current academic year and would like for that to be included in a community report, you can get in-touch with the team at uprooted@fcjrefugeecentre.org, with subject line “Phase 2 Report Card.”

Some of the updates and wins to highlight from the advocacy associated with the Phase 1 report are the amendments reflected in the TDSB Operational Procedure PR518 surrounding admission processes and documents for refugee claimants and non-status folks updated on the website on August 27, 2024.

With the start of the school year, the province has been more strict on acceptable address proof documents for the purpose of fee allocation and audition for students that meet fee exemptions enrollment categories and this is reflected in the Ministry of Education Memorandum SB16 sent out to Directors of Education and Superintendents of Business on August 28, 2024.



Ongoing Programs

The following programs have opening for registrations:

1. Uprooted Jr. MusicBox Group Lessons

Where: In-Person 208 Oakwood Ave, York, ON M6E 2V4

When: Thursdays 4PM-5PM

2. Uprooted Youth

Where: Virtual English Classes - Online on Zoom

When: Thursdays 3:30PM-4:30PM



Client Testimonial

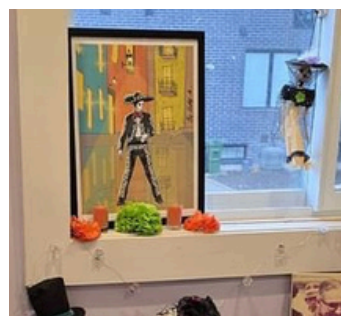
The Refugee Housing Hub was a result of the refugee shelter and housing crisis in Toronto. The FCJ Refugee Centre supported refugees to find temporary accommodation and helped them to find permanent housing. Here is a testimonial from one of the clients who has been supported through the Refugee Housing Hub.

My name is Julius Ssemambo S., and this is my brief story about the FCJ Refugee Centre.

I came to Canada on January 18, 2024, and stayed in a hotel for 5 days. Then, I ran out of money, so I decided to go to Peter Street. However, I remember it was very cold, and Peter Street was very full at the moment, so I got stranded outside on the streets. After two hours outside, a lady named Jacqueline from the FCJ Refugee Centre came by and told me that they help with the settlement of newcomers. That's how I ended up there.

At the FCJ Refugee Centre, I was assigned to a worker to help me with my paperwork Liz (FCJ Refugee Centre Housing Worker) worked with me very well and got me legal aid and a place to stay. To cut the story short, Liz helped me throughout until I received my positive decision from Immigration.

Thank you so much, FCJ Refugee Centre.



FCJ Refugee Centre traditional altar on November



FCJ Refugee Centre Halloween Party, on October 31



 **CONTACT US**



Info@fcjrefugeecentre.org



(416) 469-9754 208



Oakwood Ave, Toronto
ON M6E 2V4



fcjrefugeecentre.org