

WINTER 2026 NEWSLETTER



UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

MusicBox Recital

**Refugee Hearing Orientations
every other Thursday**

**Webinar: What Are My
Educational Options After High
School with Precarious
Immigration Status?**

And more!

SAVE THE DATE

**FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE
35th ANNIVERSARY
GALA DINNER**

OCTOBER 15, 2026, 6PM

HONOUREE/SPEAKER:

ALEX NEVE

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST,
FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CANADA,
OFFICER OF THE ORDER OF CANADA

TIBETAN CANADIAN
CULTURAL CENTRE
40 TITAN RD, #T0BICOKE



International Women's Day

Despite the rain, we proudly joined the International Women's Day march, standing together, as we do every year, to honour the strength, resilience, and leadership of women in our community. This day is a powerful reminder of the contributions of all women, especially those with lived experience of displacement, migration, and advocacy.

It is also an opportunity to continue demanding justice, equality, and dignity for women everywhere, particularly for migrant and refugee women, whose courage, perseverance, and energy inspire us daily.



A heartfelt thank you to the entire FCJ community for your presence, commitment, and collective strength. You helped amplify our message and made this year's march even more powerful.

Participating in this year's march reaffirmed the ongoing fight for justice, equality, and human rights. It was a meaningful moment of community, advocacy, connection, and hope.

**Happy International Women's Day today and every day,
we honour women who lead, resist, rebuild, and rise.**

Special Thanks to Carolina Gajardo for the Meaningful 'Voices of Strength' Workshop Series

A group of migrant women participated in our *Voices of Strength* therapeutic art session, beautifully guided by community artist Carolina Gajardo. Through her thoughtful facilitation, participants were welcomed into a safe, creative, and supportive space where they could come together, express themselves, and design signs for the upcoming International Women's Day march.

Using art as a pathway to healing, empowerment, and self-expression, the women crafted powerful messages that reflect their resilience, strength, and lived experiences.



"Sharing the power of art with others, teach me the importance of community building. Throughout the sessions participants express positive emotions and you witness how much they enjoy creating. It is a privilege to be there with them."

Urban Sanctuary and Solidarity in Practice: FCJ Refugee Centre, at the Soli*City 2026 Global Summit

Represented by our Co-Executive Director Diana Gallego, FCJ Refugee Centre just had the great opportunity to participate at the Soli*City 2026 Global Summit, held this March in Cape Town, South Africa.

The roundtable brought together representatives from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America, to discuss findings from their empirical research on urban migrant and refugee sanctuary and solidarity, and transformative practices.

Soli*City, of which FCJ Refugee Centre is a partner organization, is an international partnership project dedicated to studying urban sanctuary, solidarity, and hospitality for precarious migrants and refugees.





Refugee Claimants Will Have to Co-Pay for Some Health Care

Starting May 1, 2026, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada will introduce co-payments for supplemental health products and services for eligible people (beneficiaries) covered under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), meaning that refugee claimants will have to co-pay for some of their health-care coverage.

First established in 1957, the IFHP provides limited and temporary coverage for urgent and essential health products and services for eligible beneficiaries until they transition to provincial or territorial health care programs.

A co-payment (or co-pay) is the portion of the cost of supplemental health services and products that an eligible client (also called an IFHP beneficiary) will pay directly to their IFHP-registered health-care provider. The IFHP pays the remaining amount, meaning the cost of supplemental health benefits is shared between the beneficiary and the Government of Canada.

Advocates criticized the measure, pointing out that full access to supplemental care, especially for things such as dental health and trauma counselling, is crucial to this vulnerable population.

“Four dollars doesn’t sound like a lot, but we have many patients who are on four or five, six medications because they’re diabetic and hypertensive,” said to the Toronto Star Dr. Meb Rashid, medical director at The Crossroads Clinic in Toronto, which provides comprehensive medical services to refugees.

The Canadian Refugee Health Network (CRHN) has put together a policy brief, a letter to Ministers of Health and Immigration, and a press release. These documents are part of their efforts to address the health needs of refugee populations and share best practices and recommendations. Check it here: <https://crhn.ning.com>.

Recognising Signs of Labour Exploitation for Youth in the Workforce

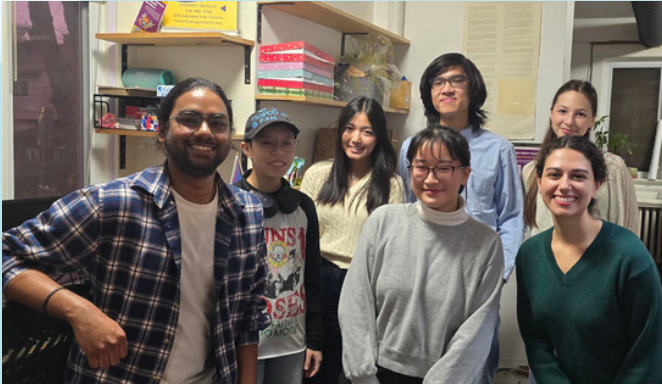
The FCJ Refugee Centre's Anti-Human Trafficking Youth Team, together with two volunteers from the Youth Network, participated in the OCASI event *Stay Connected: Stay Smart, Stay Kind & Stay Safe*, in Whitby.

The Youth Team delivered a workshop on recognising signs of labour exploitation and trafficking for youth in the workforce. The volunteers supported with the workshop, helping facilitate interactive activities and presenting the workshop material.

The event overall touched on important issues for youth regarding respect, healthy relationships, and how we show up for each other to build safer communities.



MusicBox Winter Lessons



We're so grateful to our incredible Winter 2026 team of volunteer teachers for bringing the MusicBox program to life through the UofT Chapter!

The winter class period was a wonderful success, with full attendance—8 young musicians exploring the keyboard and 2 picking up the guitar.

This wouldn't be possible without the dedication, talent, and generosity of our volunteers. Thank you for inspiring and supporting these students every step of the way!

We're also excited to announce a special recital later this term, where our students will showcase what they've been learning. Families and members of the community are warmly invited to join us in celebrating their progress and love for music.

Testimony

Michelle Ochoa

I want to express my gratitude for the opportunity to volunteer at the FCJ Centre. Being part of the center has not only allowed me to support others in need, but it has also enriched my own life in ways I never anticipated. Through volunteering, I discovered more about myself, gained a deeper understanding of the challenges others face, and found a renewed appreciation for the good things in my own life.



I am especially grateful for being welcomed as a volunteer during a time when I had lost my job and was feeling anxious about my family's future.

My time at the Centre gave me strength and a renewed sense of purpose, reminding me that even during difficult times, I am still able to make a meaningful impact. This experience has helped me recognize my own resilience and has instilled in me a lasting sense of hope.

As I prepare to move forward, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to everyone at the FCJ Centre. Each person welcomed me with open arms, and together, you created such a warm, supportive atmosphere that truly contributed to my happiness. The kindness, understanding, and camaraderie I experienced here made every day meaningful, and I feel incredibly fortunate to have been surrounded by such a remarkable group of people.

Looking ahead, my last day at the Centre was March 6, and I will be starting in my new position soon. While I am excited about this new chapter, I will always cherish my time at the FCJ Centre and the wonderful community I found here.

Thank you all once again for welcoming me so generously and allowing me to contribute. Your support has made a lasting difference in my life, and I am deeply grateful to have been part of such an inspiring organization.

Alexandra Crespo, I truly cannot express enough gratitude for introducing me to such an incredible group of people and welcoming me into the FCJ Center community. I will always be grateful for inspiring me!

Upcoming Activities & Events

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

WEBINAR
APRIL 9
4:00 PM

What Are My Educational Options After High School With Precarious Immigration Status?



FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE

What Are My Educational Options After High School With Precarious Immigration Status?

This Access to Education webinar will breakdown the different ways to get academic credits after aging out of high school, and explain what immigration statuses are eligible for what options discussed in the webinar.

We will have a handout that will guide high school students plan for their academic futures while still in school, and assist students 18+ in picking the option best suited for their long-term goals.

Check our website for registration.

Join Our Youth Network!

The FCJ Youth Network engages in a range of activities from skills-building workshops such as resume building and learning about mental health, to social activities and excursions, rallies, protests, or an annual summer trip to Canada's Wonderland.

We meet every Wednesday from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm at the FCJ Refugee Centre



Are You Waiting For Your Refugee Hearing?

Our Virtual Refugee Hearing Orientation sessions are designed to help you feel prepared, informed, and supported throughout your journey. These sessions provide refugee claimants with the knowledge they need to understand the hearing process.

If you are waiting for your refugee hearing, we invite you to join the Refugee Hearing Orientation – a friendly and informative ONLINE session designed to help you understand the hearing process and feel more prepared. The session includes an overview of free resources as legal aid, employment support, social assistance, etc.

During the session, you will learn:

- What to expect before, during, and after the hearing
- How to prepare your supporting documents
- Your rights and responsibilities as a claimant
- Tips to reduce stress and feel more confident
- Where to find legal, settlement, and community support

Check the upcoming sessions calendar, choose the date that is more convenient for you and register online.

REFUGEE HEARING ORIENTATIONS

Every other week, 12:00 PM to 2:30 PM

Meet IRB/RPD officers who will explain the refugee hearing process in this free online program for refugee claimants

Learn:

- What is a virtual refugee hearing
- How to be prepared
- What to expect
- Who participates

What is going to happen during my refugee hearing?

Scan de code to check the calendar, and register for the next available session

REGISTRATION AND CALENDAR: fcjrefugeecentre.org/refugee-orientations-online

CONTACT: Carolina Teves: cteves@fcjrefugeecentre.org

FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE

TICKETS NOW ON SALE

FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE 35th ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER

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SCAN FOR
TICKET SALE &
SPONSORSHIP
OPTIONS



CONTACT US

Phone: +1 416-469-9754

Email: info@fcjrefugeecentre.org

WhatsApp: 437-217-3786

Instagram: [@fcjrefugeecentre](https://www.instagram.com/fcjrefugeecentre)

Website: fcjrefugeecentre.org