

FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE SPRING NEWSLETTER

2022

"THE YWCA AWARD IS A
RECOGNITION OF OUR
COMMITMENT TO
CONTINUE WORKING
AND WALKING WITH
REFUGEE WOMEN"



HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS YOU CAN FIND IN THIS ISSUE:

- YWCA TORONTO WOMEN OF DISTINCTION
- WORLD REFUGEE DAY FUNDRAISER SCREENING OF "UNDOCUMENTED" THE DOCUMENTARY.
- A CALL TO ADDRESS THE WORSENING HOUSING CRISIS IN ONTARIO
- REFUGEE HOUSING HUB
- THE COMMUNITY HOUR

YWCA Toronto's largest fundraising event honoured eight extraordinary women who are improving the lives of women, girls and gender diverse people and driving positive and long-term change across our city, the country and around the world.

At FCJ Refugee Centre we are proud that Loly Rico, our Executive Director, has been chosen as one of the recipients of the YWCA Toronto Women of Distinction award. For us it is a well-deserved recognition of her work .



Congratulations Loly

Loly Rico, executive director of the FCJ Refugee Centre has been chosen as one of the recipients of the YWCA Toronto Women of Distinction award

Loly Rico has been immersed in grassroots community mobilization for more than 31 years, advocating for women, for justice and equity, and welcoming all uprooted people. After fleeing political persecution in El Salvador, Loly and her late husband, Francisco Rico, founded what is now known as the FCJ Refugee Centre.

Loly's personal migration experience exposed her to the vulnerabilities that far too many refugee women and children face, and the urgent need for community programs to support healing and safety.

Over the years, Loly and her late husband expanded the Centre's services significantly, offering refugee women and families access to legal support, information and resources, a primary health care clinic, social assistance, food security, and countless programs for community engagement. Loly has focused on providing a multitude of much-needed assistance for precarious migrants and non-status people living in Toronto

Given her passion and experience, Loly served with a number of partner organizations, including as President of both the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR). She continues to advocate for changes in government policy and has played an important role in raising awareness about the vulnerabilities to sex and labour trafficking, and other forms of exploitation, refugee and precarious migrant women and children face.

Loly was also fundamental in helping create an innovative program with York University that allows students without permanent status in Canada to enroll in post-secondary education without having to pay costly international student fees – the first and only dreamers program of its kind in Canada.

With the ongoing implementation of evolving responsive programs (like the refugee housing hub, income security program, etc), Loly continues to advocate for refugee women and echoes the core mission of the Centre and her work, "Faced with any need... aim to include, not to exclude."

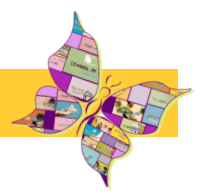
All of us at the FCJ Refugee Centre are so proud that our executive director has been chosen as one of the recipients of the YWCA Toronto Women of Distinction award. For us it is such a well-deserved recognition of her life's work.





Celebrating Women of Distinction



**A****CALL TO ADDRESS THE WORSENING HOUSING CRISIS IN ONTARIO**

A Call to Address the Worsening Housing Crisis in Ontario



The Ontario Coalition of Service Providers for Refugee Claimants Calls on All Levels of Government to Address the Worsening Housing Crisis in the Province and Its Impacts on Refugee Claimants and Precarious Migrants.

The challenges related to securing and maintaining housing for residents in Ontario have significantly intensified over the past number of years. For refugee claimants, precarious migrants and newcomers arriving in the province, securing housing has shifted from an important settlement priority to the pre-eminent challenge. Difficulty in accessing and maintaining affordable housing has led to prolonged periods of homelessness and more severe levels of poverty among these groups, and the barriers to securing housing have adversely impacted other areas of settlement and the overall wellbeing of refugee claimants across Ontario.

The agencies of the Ontario Coalition of Service Providers for Refugee Claimants are on the frontline when it comes to responding to the needs of refugee claimants and precarious migrants in Ontario. We, as service providers to refugees—many among us refugee houses and shelters—support and provide temporary housing for thousands of individuals and families each year as they navigate the refugee determination system and settle into communities across the province. In our work, we have witnessed the increasingly difficult challenges that refugee claimants face in securing housing.

We call on the Government of Ontario, the Government of Canada and municipal governments across the province to acknowledge the barriers to housing that refugee claimants continue to face upon arrival in Ontario, and we ask you to take concrete steps to ensure access to housing for those who are seeking safety and protection in our province. All levels of government have a responsibility to do better, and we stand ready to work alongside government and community partners who are committed to doing their part to improve access to housing for the individuals and families we support.

To read the complete message and the agencies signing the call please visit our website:

<https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/2022/04/a-call-to-address-the-worsening-housing-crisis-in-ontario/>



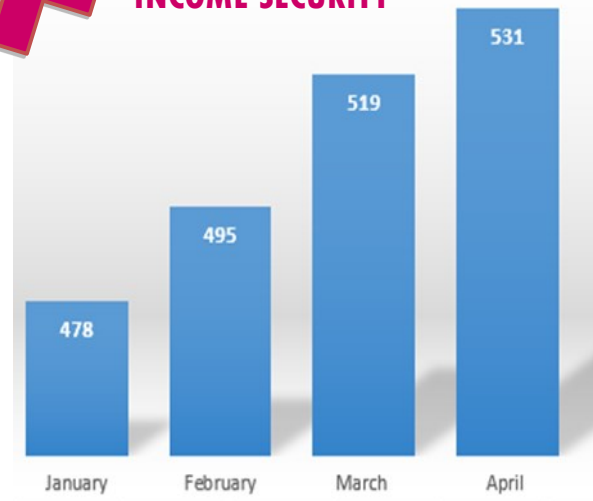
WOMEN'S PROGRAM

We keep supporting women and their children living in our Transitional Houses – many, if not most, of these women have fled circumstances of gender persecution, including domestic violence, human trafficking and sexual assault. In total we have 27 residents, out of which 7 are single mothers with children and 20 are single women.

During this spring we are resuming our monthly in person meetings and our traditional fieldtrip to Sanctuary North and other places this summer.



FOOD DISTRIBUTION & INCOME SECURITY



We continue providing support with food baskets in person as well as deliveries to different areas of Toronto such as Etobicoke, North York, Midtown, Scarborough. In addition, we have the financial support program that greatly helps refugees in getting on with their lives at the time when other sources of funding are not available to them.

Since January 2022 the food program has increased in number. So far we have been supporting more than 500 families across the GTA.





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EFUGEE HOUSING HUB

We are excited to introduce a new program for refugee claimants. It provides the seed of a replicable integrated housing model for refugees living in and around Toronto. While we continue to adapt and respond to the emergent needs of our community, we see the opportunity for immediate intervention.

The main objective of the Program is to alleviate the pressure on the Shelter System, by providing an immediate response 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, through a recently established emergency community to provide integrated support in cases of settlement.

We are looking to ensure that refugee claimants do not reach the City Shelter system and have alternative solutions, including two additional community-run emergency shelters, as well as short-term hotel stays when necessary.

Simultaneously, each claimant will be assisted by

To apply for this program, you must call
Toronto Central Family Intake:

416-338-4766 or toll-free 1-877-338-3398

Housing and Settlement workers to navigate all the processes necessary to restart their lives in Canada, for example, they will be assisted in applying to Legal Aid and Ontario Works, to enroll their children in schools and they can go to English classes. They will be helped to find permanent housing solutions by exploring the possibilities of relocating to the outskirts of the city, and other settlement needs that arise in the process.

We are grateful to the City of Toronto for making a visionary decision aware of the need to provide shelter and sanctuary to refugees. And also to our strategic partners to achieve this noble goal: The Peoples House, Romero House and Matthew House Toronto.



Turkish – Episode #2:
İltica Basvurusu
Surecinde Konut
Desteği



Farsi – Episode #1:
پشتیبانی برای اسکان متقاضیان
پناهندگی



Spanish – Episode #41:
Ayuda de vivienda:
Refugee Housing Hub

<https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/fcj-refugee-centre-podcasts/>



YOUTH PROGRAM

FCJ Youth Network has shaped a positive and inclusive space to welcome migrant and refugee youth from around the world.

We created a WhatsApp group, which is the best way to communicate with the group. So far 40 youth are very active through this platform.

We use it to inform of any opportunity, events, and activities. It has been a huge help for youth to keep connected with the community.

Some of the current activities: Family dinner, Uprooted U, peer-led workshops, fieldtrips, etc.



THE FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE INVITES YOU TO JOIN:

COMMUNITY HOUR



EVERY THURSDAY FROM 4-5 PM ON ZOOM
STARTING IN JUNE

We are partnering with community volunteers to provide you with skill building workshops on a weekly basis, ranging from self-care to professional and artistic advancement.

For monthly calendar and registration contact Stefan: stefanj@fcjrefugeecentre.org





Immigration Help and Refugee Protection



We've still seen a significant increase of refugee claimants (both Inland and Port of Entry claims) that require orientations both in person and remotely. A majority of these claimants

are from Mexico, Colombia, and Nigeria.

Unfortunately, IRCC is still having issues in dealing with the backlog of protected person permanent resident applications and this translates into significant delays from IRCC in processing submitted doc-

uments (2 months to answer a web form) and even sending contradicting requests for information that was already submitted. We are still seeing a steady level of clients dealing with situa-

tions of domestic violence that need support escaping their abusers and separating their cases. Finally, we would like to celebrate one successful appeal that our pro-bono law students won and multiple H&C applications (3 concurrently) submitted by our office which are now in the second stage (permanent residence).



My experience working at FCJ



I first started at FCJ Refugee Centre in September of last year, almost a year after graduating from a program focused on Immigration and Settlement Studies. I remember my first day at the office and feeling nothing but welcomed - I immediately was made to feel part of the team. Right from the start I was impressed at how everyone at FCJ works with such dedication and passion in supporting those with precarious migration status. I was equally impressed at the abundance of services and support offered at FCJ in such a small space. FCJ's holistic approach to providing wrap-around services and walking with people step by step, and side by side is something unique in the field. It took me a month to fully grasp how many services were offered to the community.

Starting in the position I learned that there was no typical work day at FCJ as each day brings challenges and opportunities to learn something new. Staff Members are always encouraged to partake in various trainings, conferences, and workshops which contributes greatly to your own professional growth. Being a staff member at FCJ Refugee Centre is a wonderful experience, that of course still comes with its own set of obstacles which is ingrained in the nature of this work. However, working with a wonderful team filled with love and commitment you always feel supported. As a new staff member I was honored to play a small role in directly supporting the community and helping to keep the door open for all, regardless of status. This is the core of what makes working at FCJ a truly special experience.

Thank you FCJ Refugee Centre for giving me the opportunity to be part of this team and community!

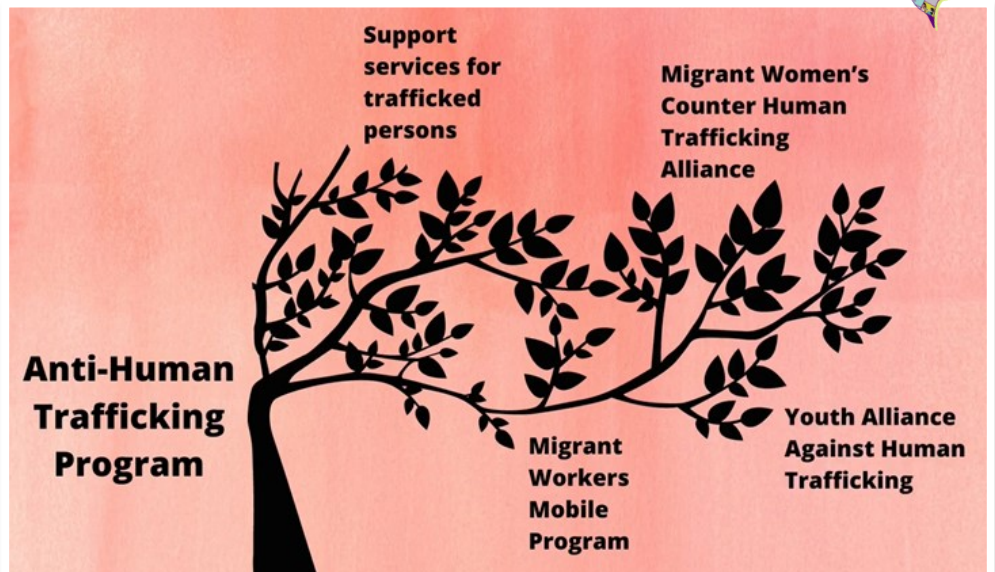


Anti-Human Trafficking

The Anti-Human Trafficking team has been busy with an increasing number of referrals for support with applications such as Open Work Permits for Vulnerable Workers and Temporary Resident Permits for Victims of Trafficking in Persons (VTIP-TRP). We have been meeting with clients in person, and remotely to offer over-encompassing support. We are continuing to receive referrals from clients themselves, partner organizations, law enforcement and past clients who are connecting us with other migrant workers.

After our focus groups with Migrant Workers that were held in Leamington, London and the GTA, our team is finalizing a report that will be published with the findings. We hope that with this report, recommendations will be followed to address the gaps in information and services that impact migrant workers. This report will be available this summer.

Also this summer, The Migrant Mobile Program will be visiting migrant workers in rural and remote areas now that it is safer to do so. We will be visiting areas such as Owen Sound, Durham region, Barrie, Collingwood etc. to meet with migrant workers and offer information sessions about their labour rights and the signs of exploitation. We are looking forward to connecting with more partner organizations and outreaching to more migrant workers.



Most recently, in May, the FCJ Refugee Centre along with supporting Toronto Counter Human Trafficking Network organizations, Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture and Aura Freedom successfully hosted a virtual roundtable titled "Counter Human Trafficking Collaboration In Pandemic Times: How can we improve and advance our prevention work?". The event saw over 50 participants so we were able to have 5 roundtables that all explored the power of collaboration and where we need to improve our efforts with grass-root organizations, community members and individuals with lived experience. James McLean (CCTEHT) presented the current human trafficking trends impacted by COVID-19, and Tashin Rodoshi (Aura Freedom) presented a brief overview of human trafficking 101. The discussions were meaningful and rich, and the takeaway was that participants want to continue this series with future roundtables. Stay tuned for the report and future round table events.



**WORLD REFUGEE DAY FUNDRAISER SCREENING OF “UNDOCUMENTED” THE DOCUMENTARY.
THE STORY OF 1 OF THE 500,000 UNDOCUMENTED PERSONS IN CANADA**

On the World Refugee Rights Day, we are inviting you to join the screening of ‘Undocumented’. There are an estimated 500,000 undocumented persons believed to be living in Canada. Half are reported to live in the greater Toronto area. ‘Undocumented’ attempts to illustrate the many contributions this group can make to Canada through the story of one.

We want to congratulate Akil for sharing his story and speaking for those who were unable to stake their claim in the country they contribute to.

When: Mon, 20 June 2022, 8:30 PM – 10:00 PM EDT

Where: Yonge-Dundas Theatre (10 Dundas Street East, Toronto, ON M5B 2R8)

Tickets: \$15 (All proceeds go to FCJ Refugee Centre). <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/undocumented-late-show-tickets-363017133017>

More details at FCJ Refugee Centre website: <https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/events/screening-of-undocumented-the-documentary/>

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