

# Spring Newsletter

MAY 2023

**Walking With Uprooted  
People**







## Vaccine Ambassadors

The FCJ Refugee Centre hosted a special event to say thanks to the vaccine ambassadors and recognize their great work during COVID-19 pandemic. They were key component of the successes and impact of the city's vaccine campaign, being essential points to contact in the neighborhoods where they live and/or work providing access to vaccine resources, building vaccine confidence, and amplifying public health messaging across their networks. They helped us continue to keep our door open and we couldn't be more grateful for their work. Thank you so much to all of you!



## The Law foundation of Ontario Meeting

We are proud and excited to have joined the Law Foundation's Catalyst Day this year. The meeting was a great gathering. It was a great opportunity for networking, and to hear all the great experiences the other agencies had to share. It was a great learning experience also, being able to learn about leadership, strategic fundraising, program evaluation, and revenue development.



## Capacity Development Training

As an established organization dedicated to providing comprehensive settlement and support to refugees and precarious migrants, FCJ Refugee Centre has recently introduced a new program, called "Capacity Development Training". This innovative initiative aims to expand our services for newcomers by collaborating with non-profit organizations across Canada that face resource limitations while serving refugee claimants in their communities. Our program ensures that these organizations are equipped with the necessary tools to provide effective services and are provided with support for immigration trends and settlement services.

We have observed that many refugees are settling in remote areas with limited access to legal education and other resources, and we aim to address this gap with our recognized expertise and track record. Our program provides facilitators for each workshop, along with resource materials that include recorded presentations. We also offer support in dealing with complex cases, as well as covering the costs of billet and transportation for the facilitators. We are thrilled to launch this program and are confident that it will be a tremendous success in helping to improve the lives of refugees and precarious migrants across Canada.

# The Annual Victims and Survivors of Crime Week

The Toronto Counter Human Trafficking Network is holding their annual Victims and Survivors of Crime Week event on May 17th from 10-12:30pm. The event will be a hybrid forum focused on raising awareness and addressing the root causes of labor trafficking in Canada. The forum will feature a panel discussion with experts from victim supporting organizations, advocates and researchers, and those with lived experience of labor trafficking in Canada.

The topics that will be discussed include raising awareness about current human trafficking trends, addressing the use of housing exploitation, identifying the root causes of emerging trends through policy examination, and developing recommendations to foster collaboration towards solutions. The panelists will share their experiences, research findings and offer suggestions on how to protect and support victims and survivors of labor trafficking. The event aims to encourage collaboration between service providers, government, law enforcement, and those directly impacted by labor trafficking to better respond and prevent labor trafficking in Ontario

**The Power of Collaboration**  
May 14 to 20  
2023

**Victims and Survivors of Crime Week**

TCHTN Presents a Panel Discussion on:  
"A Call For Action To End Labour Trafficking:  
How Collaboration Can Lead to Solutions "

**Our Speakers:**

- Selene Mateos Solis  
Survivor of Labour Trafficking
- Connie Stevens  
Researcher, Advocate & Sexual Assault Nurse
- James McLean  
Director of Research Policy, CCTTHT
- Jovana Blagovcanin  
Anti-human Trafficking Manager, FCJ Refugee Centre
- Ezat Mossallanejad  
Policy Analyst, CCVT
- Kelly Howe  
Senior Manager, Ministry of Labour
- Nadia Nadeem  
Lawyer, Neighborhood Legal Services

**Topics:**  
Immigration and Housing Policy Analysis  
Discussing Current Labour Trafficking Trends  
Strengthening Supports and Services for Victims and Survivors

**349 Ontario Street  
Toronto, ON M5A 2V8**

**May 17th , 2023**

**10:00 AM - 12.30 PM**  
LUNCH TO FOLLOW EVENT

**When:** Wednesday May 17th, 10AM to 12PM

**Where:** 349 Ontario Street, Toronto, ON M5A 2V8

Click on the [LINK](#) To register

For more information please contact:  
[jovanab@fcjrefugeecentre.org](mailto:jovanab@fcjrefugeecentre.org)





## Youth & Access to Education Programing

The FCJ **Youth Network** has been up to some seriously awesome stuff lately, thanks to the support of the [Maytree Foundation](#). Our Youth Program is an incredibly diverse community that creates a safe space for newcomer youth to come together, share ideas, and create initiatives that make a real difference in their communities. We have an amazing group of young people from all over the world, including Mexico, Columbia, Jamaica, Barbados, China, and more! We meet every Wednesday, and we've seen up to 30 youth attend our weekly sessions, with over 110 newcomer youth involved overall.

But that's not all - our **Access to Education Program** is also going strong! We've been working hard to help newcomer families navigate the school enrollment process at the [TDSB](#) and [TCDSB](#) at the elementary and secondary levels in Toronto and the surrounding area. We've hosted webinars, built relationships with school staff, and continue to collaborate post-secondary educational pathways through programs like Sanctuary Scholars at Toronto Metropolitan University and York University. And that's not even the coolest part - we also have our very own Uprooted Jr Music Box program, run by amazing volunteers from the UofT Music Box Chapter. On January 24th we had a special edition podcast in honor of [International Day of Education](#) named [#HomeIsHere](#). So, there you have it - the FCJ Youth & Education Network is making big waves, and we're always looking for more young people to join us in making a difference. Come join the fun and let's create a brighter future together





## A Roadmap to Justice

A Roadmap to Justice is a project in which we envision youth being connected from their arrival, in a system where UASC (unaccompanied and separated children) are identified by various actors at the initial point of contact with the immigration system. This will allow them to access qualified support in different areas that might be fundamental for their settlement and immigration journey. Most minors face barriers to justice in the refugee determination and immigration system. They are expected to navigate the system without qualified support or are treated as accessories for their legal guardian's immigration process. Often when they get support it's too late and limited.

We will be working with youth in the Toronto (GTA) area, building a safe space led by a Youth Leadership Committee facilitating for this population to control the narrative and propose the changes they see as needs from their lived experience. The outcome that we will have after the 2-year project will be: a Theory of change and an implementation plan. We recognize that it may include some degree of legislative and regulatory change and a shift in the delivery of services to youth from some community organizations including ourselves. We acknowledge that this response will require that relevant stakeholders have the necessary resources to respond to initial referrals. We understand that this project will serve as justification and valuable research to support future programs that we might execute to implement the findings of this project.





Featured images ([www.walkwithamal.org](http://www.walkwithamal.org))

## Little Amal

Little Amal is a 3.5-metre puppet of a 10-year-old Muslim Syrian girl forced by war to flee her home in Aleppo. The purpose of her first ‘walk’ was to find her mother from whom she had become separated. Her travelling festival of hope was created by inviting artists, cultural and humanitarian organizations, civil society and faith leaders as well as schools and colleges to welcome Amal, a Muslim child, in a way that was authentic and meaningful to that locality.

Amal has now participated in 240 “Events of Welcome” in 13 countries. Before her journey in New York City began, an independent assessor estimates she had engaged live with 1 million and 10s of millions (perhaps a billion) online. She also estimated that 550,000 children have engaged with Amal through the Activity & education pack, downloaded 10s of thousands of times in 65 countries.



Little Amal connects with a young girl next to Hertford College, University of Oxford. Credit: Bess Levin Markel.



Little Amal connects with a young girl next to Hertford College, University of Oxford. Credit: Bess Levin Markel.

## **Our Participation as FCJYN**

On May 24, 2023, the FCJ Youth Network will be collaborating with the Luminato Festival to handmade butterflies in preparation to invite Little Amal in Toronto; and on June 7, 2023 the FCJ Youth Network will be going to Union Station to welcome and support Little Amal's journey from Union Station to Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto. The idea of working with local communities is (a) to know about Little Amal and the project; (b) to share her story with more people; and (c) to participate in the project as well; highlighting the message "don't forget about us" - ensuring everybody is welcome and respected with humanity and lived experiences. The welcoming and 14 walks across Ontario, Canada are free and open to anyone - you will be able to spot us with a welcome sign and some butterflies!!

The goals of each of Little Amal's 'walks' are:

- To create an artwork of the highest quality that tells the story of an unaccompanied refugee child;
- To inspire and support communities to create a welcome for Amal that they would never forget;
- To see Amal as a symbol of a set of values;
- To be welcomed by 'power' in each community and to be seen to be welcomed by power;
- To give visibility to refugees and vulnerable immigrants bringing the marginalized into the centre of the community;

Little Amal's story opens up discussion about and creative responses to immigration in schools;

To connect to a global audience through social media and websites.

To shift perceptions around refugees and immigrants from being 'an issue' and 'a crisis', to individual human beings with potential;

To create a corridor of friends, galvanized by the message *Don't Forget About Us*.





# Statement on the expansion of the Safe Third Country Agreement

The Canadian Council for Refugees is highly concerned with the recent expansion of the Safe Third Country Agreement and its devastating impacts on tens of thousands of people who have been forcibly displaced and are seeking protection. Their fundamental rights need to be at the centre of Canada's concerns. Under international human rights law, Canada has legal obligations to uphold their right to protection.

The Agreement will force more people back to the US, where they will be at risk of arbitrary detention and potential return to persecution and possibly death. The Supreme Court is expected to rule soon on whether the existing Safe Third Country Agreement violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms – it is shocking that the Canadian government is extending the Agreement while the question of the constitutionality of the Agreement is before the Court.

Applying the Safe Third Country Agreement between Ports of Entry will not stop irregular crossings – it will simply make them more irregular, dangerous, and underground. We can expect to see an increased number of people hurt or even dying as they attempt risky routes across the border, including in deep winter. Unscrupulous smugglers will take advantage of the opportunity to make money out of people's desperation.

The fact that the revised agreement requires people not to make a refugee claim within 14 days of entering Canada means that people may be under the control of smugglers for two weeks, vulnerable to abuse, and knowing that if they flee the smugglers they will lose the opportunity to make a refugee claim.

Although we welcome the government's commitment to resettle 15,000 people from the Western Hemisphere, we note that this is a small number, compared to the number of people who will be barred from seeking refugee protection in Canada. It is a very small number compared to the more than 177,958 Ukrainians who have arrived in the country and the more than 592,405 whose applications have been approved. Since we have shown that we are able to create efficient pathways to safety and welcome considerable numbers of Europeans, we should be able to provide protection to the roughly over 40,000 people that cross the border seeking protection in a year.

The changes to the Agreement have been adopted without consultation or adequate preparation. In a democratic country, we expect that changes to the regulations will be publicly announced in advance, with an opportunity for comment – in this case, the government has exempted the regulatory change from the consultation process. Not only was there no consultation, but the implementation is extremely rushed, leaving people en route to Canada in the lurch, and not giving time to ensure that border officials are properly trained.

At a time when Canada is aiming to make its immigration system more inclusive, it is deeply regrettable that the government is working to exclude refugees, most of whom are racialized and extremely vulnerable.



## Tote Bag

The FCJ Youth never fail to amaze us with their endless supply of fresh, creative ideas to keep our youth program going strong! In fact, they have even crafted an absolutely stunning Tote bag to help us raise funds for the cause and let me tell you, it's a real head turner. The bags will be available for sale at the FCJ Centre reception and our awesome street party on Jun 10th, 2023 for CAN\$20 a bag.



## Coming Soon Superheroes Without Borders

is a podcast that celebrates the heroic origin stories of migrants and explores the intersection of migration and superpowers. Each episode features the inspiring stories of migrant superheroes who have overcome adversity, empowered themselves and others, and used their powers for humanitarian and social justice causes. Through interviews and discussions, the podcast explores themes of resilience, diversity, community, and cultural identity, shedding light on the complexities of migration and the importance of support systems. Join us on this journey of celebrating the superheroes without borders!"

**Stay tuned will be shared through Soundcloud & Spotify and will find the link in our website!**



# Upcoming Events

FCJ's street party is looking for talented people to perform in the party



FCJ Refugee Centre  
Working With Unsettled People

DIVERSE RESIDENTS,  
ONE COMMUNITY

# STREET PARTY

FROM 12PM TO 6PM

**June 10, 2023**

A family event with activities for children, games, food, music, live performances, piñatas and much more!

**OUTSIDE OUR OFFICE LOCATION**

208 Oakwood Ave., Toronto



# Call for Performers

YOU ARE INVITED TO PERFORM AT OUR 'DIVERSE RESIDENTS, ONE COMMUNITY' STREET PARTY FESTIVAL

SHARE YOUR TALENT!

**june 10** 12PM - 6PM

THIS IS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW YOUR UNIQUE TALENTS THROUGH A DAY OF MUSIC, DANCE, AND FOOD FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.

Contact us before June 1st:  
kellya@fcjrefugeecentre.org  
416-4699754 ext 231

FCJ Refugee Centre  
Working With Unsettled People



FCJ YOUTH NETWORK PRESENTS

# Super Heros Without Borders



Available on -

Listen on Apple Podcasts

Podcast for young people to share their experiences

## Contact Us

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