



SUMMER NEWSLETTER

July 2023



Annual General Meeting 2023



The Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday, June 15, 2023, and was the first in person meeting after the pandemic. The meeting was open to the public and we had the participation of staff, volunteers and other community members. During the meeting the members addressed various important matters pertaining to FCJ Refugee Centre

During the AGM, members recognized the remarkable work, achievements, and leadership of Sister Lois Anne Bordowitz, FCJ.

The meeting acknowledged her contributions and also addressed the leadership transition, as Sister Lois Anne stepped down from her position as the Chair of the Board of Directors. In her place, Sharry Aiken assumed the role as the new Chair. Sr. Lois Anne thanked the members of the Board of the FCJ Refugee Centre, both those who had served and those newly elected, for their generous service to the FCJ Refugee Centre.



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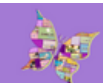
FCJ Street Party

Our Annual Street Party, which is always the highlight of the summer, aimed at celebrating diversity and building community, took place with great success on the 10th of June. It was amazing to witness the richness of our community and how everyone came together, sharing their experiences and stories while enjoying our incredible program. The setup was fantastic, with a street closure, stage, music, food, a kids' corner, face painting, and a diverse range of cultural performances. The street party also provided a platform for local talents to shine.

Elder Summer Cliff, President of the Indigenous Justice Network, took to the stage, delivering a thought-provoking land acknowledgement and urging attendees to reflect on Canada's historical foundations. Drawing attention to the true history upon which the nation was built, Elder Cliff emphasized the importance of understanding and acknowledging the indigenous roots of the land. The audience enthusiastically joined in singing a song of unity, demonstrating their commitment to inclusivity and reconciliation.

Throughout the day, various community leaders and figures shared their insights and experiences and delivered compelling speeches, shedding light on the challenges faced by refugees in Canada. Alejandra Bravo, the Councilor for Ward 9 Davenport, showcased her extensive background in community leadership and highlighted her commitment to empowering communities through political engagement. Marit Stiles, the Member of Provincial Parliament for Davenport, expressed her support for the event and emphasized the importance of fostering a sense of community and understanding. Julie Dzerowicz, Member of Federal Parliament also for Davenport, acknowledged and praised the work of FCJ and emphasised that all people living in Canada, regardless of their origin, are equal in terms of rights.

The event was a resounding success, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds and fostering a sense of unity and inclusivity. Thank you to all the volunteers from our community and our staff team for making this day memorable. As the sun set on this memorable day, our guests left with a renewed sense of connection and appreciation for the diversity of their community. FCJ Refugee Centre Street Party continues to be an annual celebration that not only showcases the talent and resilience of individuals but also promotes a more inclusive society.



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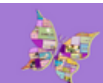


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Labour Trafficking in the News

FCJ Refugee Centre's Anti-Human Trafficking team has been busy supporting victims of labour trafficking and exploitation in Ontario since 2004. In just the last year, there have been 5 large labour trafficking cases in the news that took place within our province. Migrant workers are recruited from countries such as Mexico, with the promise of decent work, pay, work permits and housing. When they arrive, they find out that their new opportunity in Canada is not as promised. Often, they are paid very little or not at all, live in overcrowded and unsanitary housing, are being charged exorbitant rent, and are forced to work in extremely unsafe and unjust conditions. Fortunately, there seems to be a shift in focus by law enforcement where they have recognized that labour trafficking is a very real form of human trafficking in Canada. However, there are still major misconceptions about labour trafficking and a lack of understanding of the nuances in international cases of human trafficking that involves precarious status migrants.

One major misconception that our centre has identified is that authorities (and the general public) believe that the victims of labour trafficking have consented to their conditions of work. When these cases are examined through a sex trafficking lens, authorities will look for elements such as; inability to come and go from their housing, inability to leave their workplace, physical violence, direct threats, and seizure of documents by a third party. They look for this to prove that the labour is forced, and the victim had no other choice. This completely overlooks the vulnerabilities of a migrant in Canada and the forms of coercion that are used to control them by their abuser or trafficker. In most cases, victims of labour trafficking have invested money to come to Canada to work and have been recruited to work through false promises and deceit. When they arrive, and realize they have been deceived they may feel they have no other choice because they have invested all their money to come to Canada, have incurred debt to work in Canada, do not speak English and may be afraid for their own safety or the safety of their family.



They feel forced to continue working under these deplorable conditions because without any money or knowing where to go, they do not have any other choice. In some cases, they have been directly threatened with violence or with denunciation to authorities. In other cases, they may be threatened by more subtle means such as suggestions that the traffickers has connections in their country of origin or within Canada.

We continue to advocate that many workers may have been forced to accept their exploitative conditions because they do not feel they have any other choice. This may be because they have been told this by their employer or because the systemic barriers they face in obtaining work permits, changing the conditions of their work permit or regularizing their status. We cannot ignore the significance that the fear of deportation can play in a migrant's life. It's a true fear that can force a person into hiding, into further exploitation or into compromising situations. Without the ability to regularize their status, they are left with very little options. The news covering these labour trafficking stories of migrant workers "rescued" by police often fail to highlight the broken system that oppresses the very people we are "rescuing". This is why FCJ Refugee Centre supports the Status for All campaign as the best preventative measure to protect migrants from exploitation.

For more information on the Status for All Campaign, visit <https://migrantrights.ca>.

Status for All Campaign



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Summer Students Testimonials



Hanami Ono (she/her), Anti-Human Trafficking Women's Program Coordinator

My name is Hanami, and I recently completed a diploma in Social Service Work- Immigrants and Refugees stream at Seneca College. I currently work full-time at FCJ Refugee Centre. I initially got familiar with FCJ Refugee Centre's work through course materials that my professor used in his classes.

They were incredibly informative, including the voices of people with lived experiences. I applied for my field placement here because I deeply agreed with how it had been fighting against migrant rights and status through diverse services in multiple languages for years.

I have been an international student in Canada since 2012, so I have some lived experiences myself as a precarious migrant. Meanwhile, as Japanese, I come from and live with a lot of privilege. Considering my social location, I was nervous about working in this sector till, I also thought it was the best opportunity to brush up on my skills and knowledge through practice while advocating for social causes.

I did my placement in the Refugee Protection Team, and I am thankful to have learned numerous things. To be honest, it was overwhelmingly fast-paced from day one. Every case was different, and most cases required attentive but prompt actions. Even though I studied a lot of concepts like trauma-informed practice at school, I learned everything by shadowing my team members and working on actual cases rather than reading through manuals. I often felt frustrated and helpless, without being able to see clear goals or any change, facing systemic barriers or getting requested for something beyond our capacity. Nevertheless, I was fortunate to have such a great support system who would take the time to answer my questions and believe in me. My extraordinary colleagues and their strong mindsets for social change and my clients' resilience and kindness have motivated me to keep going.

My life has had ups and downs since I came to Canada, and I sometimes feel lonely without having any biological family members here. Still, I am happy, honoured, and proud to be a part of this wonderful community and work towards social cause. I believe what we do is exceptional, and I hope FCJ Refugee Centre keeps thriving and changing people's lives.

Hanami Ono



Summer Students Testimonials



Sophia Rottman

Being a summer student at FCJ has been an amazing learning experience around a wonderful community. The centre is a very welcoming environment and community-oriented space. The staff are always willing to lend a hand, whether it is helping explain a task or translate a language you don't know.

Working in the immigration and refugee protection area, I have learned a lot, including how to write humanitarian and compassionate applications and pre-removal risk assessments.

These applications include researching the country conditions of the applicant's country of origin, compiling their supporting documents, such as support and employment letters, children's reports cards, and English language certificates, and writing about the applicant's establishment in Canada and the best interests of the children.

Everybody at FCJ brings a different wealth of knowledge and someone is always able to offer advice or teach you something new. Also, have been at FCJ while Little Amal, a symbol for child refugees, was in Toronto, so I had the opportunity to go with a group from FCJ to the walk downtown. My time here has been a chance to learn about different countries and cultures and take part in this community. It has been a great experience.

Sophia Rottman



Capacity Development Training

The Capacity Development Training program was launched in May 2023, thanks to the funding and support from Northpine. This groundbreaking program operates at the national level.

As part of this initiative, we are providing free training resources specifically designed for agencies throughout Canada that require support. Our primary goal is to extend our reach beyond major urban centers and establish connections with smaller municipalities and rural areas across the country. Through our comprehensive remote or in-person training services, we aim to equip agencies with the knowledge and tools necessary to effectively assist refugee claimants and individuals facing precarious situations.

We have commenced our outreach process to introduce our program, and numerous organizations have shown interest in being part of our capacity development training.

A Roadmap to Justice

Our collaborative project *A Roadmap to Justice* was launched in April 2023 by the FCJ Refugee Centre and the Centre for Refugee Children. Our goal is to improve the immigration system by addressing gaps and creating a more supportive environment for unaccompanied minors and youth. We are proud to announce that our Youth Leadership Committee is now established with five members who have lived experience and will play a crucial role in leading and shaping the project. By providing invaluable insights, they will ensure that our efforts align with real needs and challenges. The committee will also monitor the relevance of information and proposed solutions to effectively address the identified gaps.

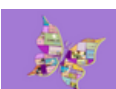
We are excited to start this journey with our committed Youth Leadership Committee. We eagerly anticipate their valuable contributions towards creating a long-term positive impact on the lives of unaccompanied minors and youth going through the immigration system. Keep an eye out for updates and progress reports as we work towards achieving justice and driving positive change together.

If you have any inquiries regarding *A Roadmap to Justice* or would like to participate in the project, please feel free to contact us:

Email: paulao@fcjrefugeecentre.org

Phone: (416) 469 9754 ext.258; **Whatsapp:** (416) 469 0657

Thank you for your continued support.



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Our podcasts

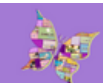
Check out our special podcasts where we explore important topics that hold great importance to FCJ Refugee Centre community. In these episodes, we address crucial issues and use this platform to shed light on matters which greatly impact people in our communities.

One episode of our *Borderless Voices* podcast focuses on the ongoing concern surrounding the Safety Third Country Agreement and the closure of borders between Canada and the United States. Meanwhile, in the Youth Network's *Home Is Here* podcast you will find the first two episodes from a new series, *Superheroes Without Borders*.

If you would like to listen to our podcasts, please click on the [link](#)

Borderless podcast:

Superheroes Without Borders Episode 2: Heaven



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SAVE THE DATE: SEPT. 23, 2023

Ride for Refuge



Once again, the staff of FCJ Refugee Centre is taking on the challenge of joining the RIDE FOR REFUGE Campaign to raise funds and awareness for refugee issues in Canada and worldwide. As members of our community, we warmly invite you to join us in this enjoyable and rewarding opportunity to raise funds and awareness. You can participate by riding or walking alongside us, showing support for our community and refugees across the globe.

Join FCJ Refugee Centre and make a meaningful impact in the lives of refugees and precarious migrants by participating in the Ride for Refuge!

Are you ready to pedal for a cause and ride towards a brighter future for those seeking refuge? Whether you're an avid cyclist or simply passionate about making a difference, this is your chance to be part of something extraordinary.

By joining existing team or creating your own, you'll not only embark on an exciting cycling adventure but also help raise vital funds to support the vital work of FCJ Refugee Centre. Every dollar you raise will directly contribute to providing essential services, advocacy, and support to individuals and families who have fled their home countries in search of safety and a better life.

Imagine the impact we can create together. Your involvement in the Ride for Refuge event will enable us to provide crucial resources, protection intervention, housing support, food security, and community integration programs for refugees and precarious migrants. Together, we can help them rebuild their lives, restore hope, and offer a warm welcome to those who need it most.



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World Refugee Day March

The March for refugee rights took place on June 20th. This significant event aimed to acknowledge and celebrate the resilience and bravery of individuals who have been compelled to leave their homes. FCJ Refugee Centre actively participated in a large-scale gathering on Monday, June 19, which involved marches held in various cities across Canada. The March commenced in front of the office of MP Marco Mendicino in North York and extended all the way to Ireland Park on the Toronto Waterfront.

Its purpose was to fight and oppose the Third Country Agreement, a policy that endangers the lives of refugees. Implemented in 2004, this agreement restricts individuals from seeking refugee protection in Canada when crossing the country's land borders. Instead, they are turned away and sent back to the United States, where they face the risk of arbitrary detention and potential return to perilous situations and persecution in their countries of origin. Despite the persistent calls from human rights advocates and activists to terminate the agreement, the government has actually expanded it, exacerbating the risks faced by refugees.

This March provided an excellent platform to unite and demand that Canada not only welcome refugees but also safeguard their fundamental rights.



Upcoming Events



THE FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE INVITES YOU TO JOIN:

UPROOTED JUNIOR ART CLASSES

AS PART OF THE FCJ UPROOTED SERIES, A SAFE SPACE FOR NEWCOMER CHILDREN AGES 6-12 TO COME TOGETHER AND CREATE ART!

3:00PM-4:00PM

EVERY TUESDAY
July 4 - August 29, 2023
208 Oakwood Ave, Toronto, ON M6E 2V4

FOR REGISTRATION CONTACT STEFAN:
STEFANJK@FCJREFUGEECENTRE.ORG






THE FCJ YOUTH NETWORK INVITES YOU TO:

SUMMER BOOK CLUB

July 6th, 2023 - August 31st, 2023

Every Thursday
3:00-4:00PM
208 Oakwood Ave,
Toronto, ON M6E 2V4

Pairing Kids 6-12 with Youth 13-30 to practice Reading English, while developing their interpersonal confidence through discussions.

For registration and more details please contact Stefan:
Stefanjk@fcjrefugeecentre.org






23 sept. 2023
rideforrefuge.org

Le Ride For Refuge est une collecte de fonds familiale, accessible à tous, en soutien aux personnes qui font face à des défis de sécurité et de la santé.

The Ride For Refuge is a family-friendly fundraising bike + walk in support of local charities serving people seeking hope, safety, and freedom.

Inscrivez-vous / faites du vélo ou marchez en équipes / donnez / soyez bénévoles
register to fundraise / team up and bike or walk / donate / volunteer / Ride23



it's not about the ride, it's about the refuge

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