

SUMMER 2026 NEWSLETTER

**Ready for
the 35th
Anniversary
Gala Dinner?**

Everything you need to know about the October 15th special event where we will celebrate 35 years of walking with uprooted people and serving the community.



Plus: The best photos from the Street Party and the Refugee Soccer Cup, upcoming events, and much more.



Celebrate With Us!

Save the date and mark your calendar! We are celebrating our 35th anniversary this year, and the highlight will be a very special Gala Dinner you won't want to miss.

This Gala will be both a celebration of all we have achieved so far and a shared commitment to continue fighting for the rights of uprooted people, alongside whom we have walked for more than three decades.

It will also be a special moment to thank all those who have supported us over the years, and welcome with open arms those who are joining us now, strengthening connections among donors, volunteers, and community leaders.

We will remember those who walked with us and are no longer here, and we'll celebrate the wonderful community we serve and of which we are a part.



October 15th, 2026



6:00 pm



**Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre
(40 Titan Rd, Etobicoke)**



Ticket Sale & Sponsorship Options:

<https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/35galasponsor/>



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Ticket Sale &
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FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE 35TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER

35 Years Walking with Uprooted People

Since we started walking with uprooted people 35 years ago, FCJ Refugee Centre has remained true to its mission and mandate of helping refugees and other uprooted people overcome the challenges of rebuilding their lives in Canadian society.

With an open door approach, the Centre offers now an integrated model of refugee protection, providing inclusive counselling and settlement support, temporary shelter for women and children, and collaborative education and advocacy that promote the protection of human rights and dignity.



2025-2026



13,494 clients served through a range of services, including support with immigration process applications, referrals to related services such as legal aid, assistance for migrant workers, help for youth and children to access education, and many other.

More than **150** information sessions and webinars delivered to individuals, service providers, and other stakeholders, reaching over **2,500** people.

2,872 food hampers delivered through our Food Security program.

833 people supported with our Settlement Services (transitional housing, health clinic, Youth Network, school registration and other supports). **1,316** clients supported by the Refugee Hub.

520 individuals supported through our Anti-Human Trafficking program.

* Data for the 2025 Annual Report

FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE 35TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER

Honouree/Featured Speaker: Alex Neve

At the FCJ Refugee Centre 35th Anniversary Gala Dinner, we will have the honour of welcoming international human rights lawyer and human rights activist Alex Neve as our Honouree/Featured Speaker.

Alex Neve believes in a world in which the human rights of all people are protected. He is presently a visiting and adjunct professor in international human rights law with the Faculties of Law and Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa and Dalhousie University, and a Senior Fellow with the University of Ottawa's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. He presently serves as a Member of the UN Human Rights Council's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela.



He was Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada's English Branch from 2000 - 2020. In that role he led and took part in over forty human rights research and advocacy delegations throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, Guantánamo Bay and, closer to home, First Nations communities in Canada.

Alex Neve is a lawyer, with an LLB from Dalhousie University and a Master's Degree in International Human Rights Law from the University of Essex. He has served as a member of the Immigration and Refugee Board, taught at Osgoode Hall Law School, been affiliated with York University's Centre for Refugee Studies, and worked as a refugee lawyer in private practice and in a community legal aid clinic.

He is the Chair of Canadian Leadership for Nuclear Disarmament and the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China, serves on the Board of Directors of the Centre for Law and Democracy, is a Fellow with the Atlantic Human Rights Centre and is a Principal Researcher with the University of Ottawa's Centre for International Policy Studies. Alex has been named an Officer of the Order of Canada and served as a Trudeau Foundation Mentor. He is a recipient of a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. He has received honorary Doctorate of Laws degrees from St. Thomas University, the University of Waterloo and the University of New Brunswick. Alex was the 2025 CBC Massey Lecturer, addressing the theme of *Universal: Renewing Human Rights in a Fractured World*.

FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE 35TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER

Join the Sponsors and Make a Real Difference

Join the sponsors of the FCJ Refugee Centre's 35th Anniversary Gala Dinner, and make a real difference in the lives of refugees, migrants, and people in precarious situations. Explore the different options, choose the one that suits you best, and help us keep our doors open!

General Admission: \$150

This ticket includes admission to the event, with a portion of the purchase eligible for a charitable tax receipt. It also provides access to the full evening program, featuring live performances, inspiring speeches, and a delicious dinner.

Sponsor a community participant: \$500

This ticket does not include admission to the event, and the full amount is eligible for a charitable tax receipt. Sponsor a community member's attendance at the Gala and help make the evening more accessible. Your contribution supports the participation of a refugee, migrant worker, or precarious migrant.

Anniversary Table Host: \$2,500

This ticket includes admission to the event, with a portion of the purchase eligible for a charitable tax receipt. Host a table for 8 and celebrate the evening with friends, family, or colleagues. Includes personalized table signage, name listing in the Gala program, and recognition on the event webpage. Perfect for families, friend groups, professionals, and board members who want to celebrate together while supporting the Centre.

Community Champion: \$5,000

This ticket includes admission to the event, with a portion of the purchase eligible for a charitable tax receipt. Sponsor a community table (8 guests) plus 2 tickets for you and a guest. A meaningful way to support community participation and help make the evening more inclusive.

For additional sponsorship opportunities, please [check the sponsorship booklet](#):

- Silver Sponsor (\$10,000)
- Golden Sponsor (\$15,000)
- Presenting Sponsor (\$25,000+)

Chose an option, find more details and read the Frequently Asked Questions at <https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/35galasponsor/>

Contact us: 35years@fcjrefugeecentre.org



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Embracing Our Diversity: The Best Pictures From the Street Party 2026





New Faces on Our Board of Directors

FCJ Refugee Centre held on June 11 its Annual General Meeting (AGM), a very special moment where, in addition to approving the annual report, accounts, and past year's proceedings, we extended our grateful recognition to the board members whose term is coming to an end (Eusebio García, Tigest Gulbet, Sandra M. González Ponce, David León Flórez De La Hoz, and Christine Gebel), and warmly welcomed our new incoming members: Luisa Bayona, Nergis Canefe, Alejandra Priego, Daniel Quesada-Rebolledo, and Alberto Sarthou.

The AGM was also a wonderful opportunity to strengthen connections outside of work hours. Furthermore, we had the honour of hosting two exceptional guest speakers: Dr. Agnes Thomas, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto (CCAT), gave an inspiring talk on Walking With People on the Move: Welcome and Community, while Adriana Vargas Chávez, an FCJ Refugee Centre former client, shared the moving testimony of her journey as a refugee now integrated into Canadian society. Thank you to everyone who attended!



'Permission to Exploit': When Your Immigration Status Depends on Your Employer

This summer we published the final episode of the special series *Permission to Exploit*, on the FCJ Refugee Centre's podcast *Borderless Voices*. The series, released over several months, has a total of 10 episodes, and it combines the insights of experienced specialists and professional experts to examine Canada's closed work permit system in depth, and the reforms needed to make it safer.

Hosted by Diana Caipa, Anti-Human Trafficking – Migrant Case Coordinator at FCJ Refugee Centre; and Jacob Basseches, Anti-Human Trafficking – Migrant Case Worker also at FCJ Refugee Centre, *Permission to Exploit* has been our most ambitious audio project to date. Including episodes in both English and Spanish, the series features very powerful testimonies, together with sharp and accurate analyses of the hard reality of labour exploitation faced by migrant workers in Canada. It clearly presents the bleak picture of closed work permits, but also opens doors to potential solutions.



Listen to all the episodes here: <https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/permission-to-exploit/>
Also on Spotify and wherever you get your podcasts.



Migrant Women Workshops: Create, Connect and Heal Through Rock Painting

Through the simple and beautiful act of painting rocks, a group of migrant women created meaningful pieces while making space for connection, reflection, and community, in the rock painting workshop *Create, Connect and Heal*.

Facilitated by community artist Carolina Gajardo, this special session invited participants to come together in a safe and supportive space, to explore art as a tool for healing, empowerment, creativity, and self-expression.

As Carolina reminded us, art can transform ordinary objects into something unique — and remind us of our own resilience and strength.

Workshops for migrant women take place at the FCJ Refugee Centre once a month. Check our website and social media to find out about the next one!



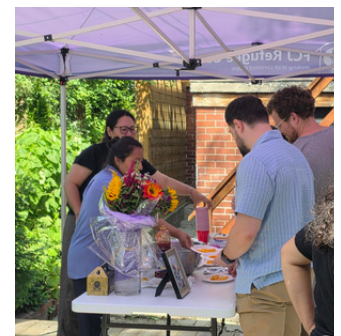
We Were at the World Cup!

Many thanks to the Germany Football Team for providing the FCJ Refugee Centre with tickets to their FIFA World Cup match against Ivory Coast in Toronto! It was a truly unique experience that many of us would not have been able to enjoy otherwise. We all had a wonderful time.



Remembering Francisco

As we do every August 13th, we honoured the memory of our beloved Co-Director Francisco Rico-Martínez, who passed away five years ago, on August 13, 2021. His leadership and commitment continue to live in our hearts and in the work we do every day. His legacy keeps inspiring us to welcome those in need and to stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable communities. We celebrated his memory with mangoes, the fruit he loved.



A Great Day of Soccer and Community Building

The 2026 Refugee Soccer Cup, hosted by the Ontario Coalition of Service Providers for Refugee Claimants, was once again a huge success. Thank you to the organizers, and congratulations to this year's brilliant champions, Sojourn House, winners for the second time in a row! We enjoyed a high level of play from all the teams, great sportsmanship, delicious food, fun activities for the children, and above all, a beautiful day outdoors where we all got to know each other a little better and had a fantastic time.





See the video and more pictures:

<https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/2026/07/a-wonderful-day-of-soccer-and-community-building/>

Testimony

My name is Maylin Calvopina, and I completed a three-week co-op at the FCJ Refugee Centre during the month of July, as part of my SHSM (Specialist High Skills Major) program at school. I decided to do my placement there because I have always liked helping migrants, whether it's by giving them information or translating for them, which is something I would like to do in the future.

During my co-op, I helped with the Youth Network and also supported the logistics for the Refugee Soccer Cup tournament. I really enjoyed all of these tasks, but my favorite part was translating. Every time I translated from Spanish to English, I felt really happy because it felt like a superpower. Sometimes I also translated from French to English, and I even had the chance to translate from Portuguese to English while I was helping at the reception desk. I love languages because they help people connect with each other.

One of the most memorable moments during my co-op was helping translate for someone applying for a work permit. It was my first time doing something like that. I still remember that day because the woman had traveled a long way to get help. We were able to book her an appointment, and I helped interpret during the process. After everything was finished, she thanked me so much for helping her. That day, I felt really proud of myself, and I went home excited to tell my mom about my experience.

I am also a photographer, and while I was helping with the logistics for the Soccer Tournament, I asked if they needed someone to take pictures for that day. They said yes, and that became one of my favorite days of the whole co-op. Everyone was happy, enjoying the game and spending time together. Taking photos allowed me to capture those special moments of happiness. Sometimes life can be very difficult, especially for people who have had to leave their home countries, so being able to preserve those memories meant a lot to me.

Overall, my co-op experience taught me many things and gave me the opportunity to do what I enjoy most: translating and taking photos. These are opportunities that I don't usually have at school. I am very thankful to all the volunteers and placement students who worked with me and helped make this such a wonderful experience.



Placement and co-op students, this summer at the FCJ Refugee Centre. Maylin Calvopina is first from the right.

Upcoming Events



On September 20, one day before Parliament returns, join people all over Canada in a **Cross-Country Day of Action for Migrant Rights** to demand:

- **Status for all:** Permanent resident status for migrants already here, and permanent resident status on arrival for migrants coming in the future.
- **Renew permits:** Automatically renew expired and expiring work and study permits, restore status, and ensure no one is pushed into exploitation or deportation.
- **End exploitation:** End employer-tied permits. Ensure equal labour rights, safe housing, healthcare, services, and real enforcement against abusive bosses.
- **Stop deportations:** End removals, detention, family separation, and attacks on refugees.

Rally and March for Migrant Justice in Toronto:

- **When:** Sunday, September 20, 2026, 2:00 pm
- **Where:** Christie Pits Park (750 Bloor West, Toronto)

More information: <https://migrantrights.ca/events/sep20/>



Join us for an informative and practical free workshop for migrant women, focused on **taxes and financial planning for families with children.**

When: September 10, 1:00–4:00 pm

Where: 208 Oakwood Avenue, Toronto

Facilitated by Zahra Nikraves, Financial Educator from Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre

This workshop is a great opportunity to learn more about managing family finances, understanding taxes, and planning ahead with confidence.

To register, please email luisam@fcjrefugeecentre.org.

Upcoming Events



FCJ Refugee Centre is participating one more year in the **Homeless Connect Toronto One-Stop-Shop** event (HCT13). Join us and learn about all the free supports and services we offer — and make sure you stop by our booth!

Whether you need refugee resources, legal advice, personal care support, housing info, or so much more, One-Stop-Shop has you covered, featuring everything from housing, employment, and legal help to pet care services. We're looking forward to seeing you!

- **When:** Sunday, October 26, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm
- **Where:** Mattamy Athletic Centre (former Maple Leaf Gardens): 50 Carlton St., Toronto, ON M5B 1J2

More information: <https://www.hctoronto.org/>



The primary goal of the **food security program** is to provide access to nutritious food to refugee claimants and families, and to people with precarious status, to alleviate one of the fundamental rights, and to support their settlement and integration into their new home.

Food distribution takes place every other Thursday, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. More information and pick up days calendar: <https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/food-security-program/>



Family dinners, workshops, movie nights, art classes, advocacy work and outings, discussions about human rights and the challenges that migrant youth face... Join us every Wednesday for the **FCJ Youth Network gathering!** The group is open for migrant and refugee youth between the ages of 13 and 30.

Learn more: <https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/fcj-youth-network/>

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 such 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:

<https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/refugee-orientations-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?

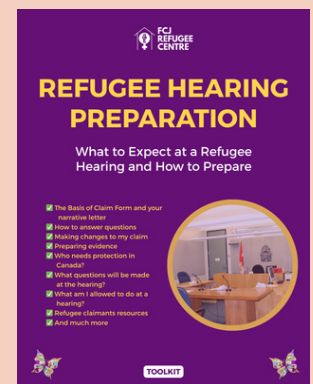
Scan the code to check the calendar, and register for the next available session

REGISTRATION AND CALENDAR: [fcjrefugeecentre.org/refugee-orientations-online](https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/refugee-orientations-online)

CONTACT: Carolina Teves: cteves@fcjrefugeecentre.org

Refugee Hearing Preparation Toolkit

Prepared by the FCJ Refugee Centre, this toolkit is a comprehensive guide to the refugee hearing, how to prepare, and what to expect.



It also includes an extensive additional section with resources available to refugee claimants. Download it here:

<https://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org/toolkit-refugee-hearing-preparation-what-to-expect-and-how-to-prepare/>



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