



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**Change. It's inevitable and CCI experienced one of its biggest changes earlier this year.**

For the first time in 28 years, the Catholic Centre for Immigrants is lead by someone not named Carl Nicholson. Myriam Mekni accepted the role of Executive Director and joined the CCI Ottawa family in May and assumed all executive director duties on August 1.

I have known Carl for many years. On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, clients, and the community, I want to thank him for his unwavering dedication to CCI Ottawa.

During his tenure, CCI Ottawa grew to an organization of 125 people that offers a myriad of programs and services to help newcomers settle in the Ottawa area..

One of Carl's last duties was to find a replacement for himself, someone who could continue the tradition of innovation and growth in the settlement sector. That person is Myriam.

As a former refugee, Myriam knows firsthand the challenges faced by newcomers when they arrive in a new country.

She also knows firsthand how to deliver the services needed by newcomers. She held various positions at the Greater Moncton Multicultural Association before being appointed as executive director of the organization.

She is also well-versed in the affordable housing file, having led Rising Tide, an organization dedicated to building affordable housing in New Brunswick.

The timing couldn't be better. There is a shortage of affordable housing in Canada as it prepares to welcome 1.4 million newcomers during the next three years. All of them will need not just affordable housing but the type of housing that accommodates large and multi-generational families.

As well, the newcomers arriving in Ottawa will continue to need help navigating Canadian culture, finding jobs, learning a language, enrolling their children into school and so much more.

We are pleased to have Myriam on board and we are excited to support her as she leads CCI through the many changes expected to come to the settlement sector.

Please join our dedicated Board, staff, volunteers, partners, and funders as we write the next chapter.



Luise Czernenko Reid President

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

**Annual reports always take a look at the year we left behind. As this is my first report as Executive Director of CCI, I want to break with that tradition.**

Instead, I want to give you a glimpse into the future. That future involves adopting progressive work strategies and technology to deliver services more efficiently to our newcomer friends.

Some of that change was forced upon us when COVID struck in March of 2020. We soon discovered that much of that change was beneficial.

For example, many of our online classes were better attended than previous in-person classes. With transportation and childcare no longer issues, newcomers were more than okay with taking an English class or learning how to write a resume from the comfort of their living room.

Technology such as Zoom allowed our counsellors to continue face-to-face service with newcomers. They were able to build trust and bonds with people who are vulnerable.

For the staff, the use of this new technology provided them with a better work-life balance. That translated into better care for our clients.

These are the reasons we will continue to offer a hybrid of online and in-person services. But we're doing more than sticking with changes brought on by the pandemic.

In addition to our hybrid work model, we are redesigning our website to focus it more on the services we provide to newcomers as well as providing community members with concrete ways they can help the newcomer community.

We are using new digital tools to make it easier for clients to register for programs. Not all newcomers are technically savvy. For that reason, there will always be a strong contingent of staff onsite ready to help people who walk through our doors. But there are many newcomers who want to connect with us virtually.

We are also encouraging more collaboration between programs so that all newcomers have access to the full range of programs we offer.

Finally, CCI is developing a new three-year strategic plan to ensure we are prepared to embrace new ways of providing services while ensuring no one is left behind.

These and many other changes in the year ahead will allow us to be nimble and fast-reacting to the services newcomers ask for and deserve.



Myriam Mekni, Executive Director



# OUR STORY SO FAR

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is two-fold. We want to help newcomers reach their full potential in Canadian society and we want to build a more welcoming community.

## OUR GOALS

CCI Ottawa has been helping newcomers since 1954. Our goal is for newcomers to be contributing members of their community, to be welcomed and to feel at home.

**The fact is Canadians understand that immigration, that people fleeing for their lives, that people wanting to build a better life for themselves and their kids is what created Canada, it's what created North America.**

**Justin Trudeau**

## OUR PRINCIPLES

Committed to social justice in all policies, programs and services

Provide assistance to newcomers regardless of race, national/ethnic origin, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical ability

Use approaches that are empowering, client-centered, and that address the physical, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions of the person

Recognize the central importance of volunteers, staff and members of the community

Work with related agencies, community organizations, and various faith groups to ensure a smooth settlement process

Be accountable to stakeholders, our funders, creditors and the community-at-large

# SETTLEMENT PROGRAM

**The Settlement Program helps newcomers with all aspects of settling and integrating into a new community, such as housing, health, education, securing documents, food and more.**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Served 4,098 individual clients from 124 countries.
- 122 group sessions attended by 1,093 clients.
- Provided services to 423 refugee claimants.
- Top 5 languages spoken by clients: English: 31%, Arabic: 16%, French: 11%, Farsi: 6%, and Spanish: 4%.
- Top 5 countries of origin of clients: Syria, Iran, Congo, Afghanistan, and Nigeria.
- In partnership with COSTI, delivered 44 Orientation to Ontario workshops to 682 clients in English, Arabic, and Dari.
- Housing team received more than \$56,000 in gift cards and helped 667 families (1,986 individuals).
- Housing team helped 231 families (1,637 individuals) with housing support.





# CSS PROGRAM

**Client Support Services Program helps Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) during their first year of resettlement and integration. It delivers a mobile, intensive case management service that recognizes their complex needs. It works with the community to provide GARs access to services such as health, housing, education, language training, employment and other community services.**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Supported 1,355 GARs.
- Provided 13,158 case management services.
- Top 3 countries of origin: Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq.
- Number of Afghan clients: 535.
- Distributed 155 computers to refugees to help them overcome digital barriers.
- Donated winter clothing thanks to the donations from the community.





# A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR THIS YOUTH

Former refugee is forging ahead at building a new life

My name is Akenga Rehani. I am a student at the University of Ottawa. My roots are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and my feet are coming from those dusty and muddy houses of Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi.

I have no doubts to mention this because that's where my success and spirit of community development came from.

Together with my mother and my three sisters, life was tough and hopelessness became the ruler of our hearts. We believed Canada was half-heaven and an open gate for my dreams and my family's. We landed in Canada July 2, 2021.

I found an answer to the problem of why many immigrants find difficulties in their first few months of arriving in Canada. This encouraged me to share my personal story with other immigrants and Canadian citizens on how best they can combat their challenges. In fact, loneliness, coldness and lack of sufficient food and shelter became some of our challenges.

However, regardless of all these challenges, I was able to find a summer job for myself and continue helping the Ottawa community as follows. Firstly, by fundraising for kids' winter coat with the Knights of Columbus at St. Augustine's Parish. Also, volunteering at the Shepherds of Good Hope soup kitchen where I am helping the homeless with dishwashing and cleaning the kitchen sometimes.

Furthermore, I never considered myself to be new to Canada by breaking the language barrier and involving myself in extracurricular activities.



I joined the Youth Futures Program which finally helped me to work in the Ottawa Community Housing office as a Maintenance Administrative Student. Indeed hard work pays.

Eventually, I started motivating many people and had a chance to become the Youth Futures 2022 Valedictorian of honour.

I became an Ontario Scholar and won the Director of Education Award for Academic Perseverance and the Ashfield Award for Community Involvement at St. Patrick's High School.

A few days later, I won the 25th RBC Spirit of the Capital Youth Award in the Category of Strength Through Diversity given by the Youth Ottawa organization.

Joining the Youth Futures Program came as a result of preparing for my future goals and learning more about intercultural relations in a multicultural setting in the Ottawa community.

With the help of the Catholic Centre for Immigrants, I was able to join this program. I never realized there are many job opportunities at the end of the Youth Futures Program. Fortunately, I was excited to hear that my first official job in Canada was to work in the Ottawa Community Housing office.

In the Youth Futures Program, we were fully trained for different employments by learning more about effective communication, teamwork, time management and how the Ontario Safety measures for employees and employers. We were trained on how to work with children (High Five training), Sun sense, Medication Administration workshops, Creative Discipline and Abuse Awareness and Reporting workshops.

This fully prepared us to accomplish our goals and get desired jobs. Many Youth Futures members

worked with the City of Ottawa as camp counsellors, water infrastructure employees and many more. Others worked with the Ottawa Community Housing Corporation's office as Maintenance Administrative Students.

I am planning to become a doctor (Ph.D.) in Public Administration and get a job in my field of study as I will be helping the Government of Canada with other administration-related research and concerns.

This will make me more active in serving Canadian society. As a new immigrant to Canada, many people have been discouraging me that I will never achieve my goals because I have no one to help me achieve my goals.

However, my short time goal is looking for the opportunity to take even a single picture with the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Justin Trudeau.

This opportunity will motivate Canada's newcomers to become more active and hopeful in trying to achieve their dreams. To me, meeting the Prime Minister is a higher level that I am hoping will open doors for my projects of mobilizing new immigrants to continue being more active and not to be depressed by their past and sad moments. I hope this will promote lots of initiatives in the city of Ottawa as well as Canada at large.

These projects might include fighting mental health, helping the homeless, organizing inclusive and diverse social events and many more.

All of these are aimed at promoting the wellness and integration of newcomers while improving Canada's social and economic development through the Catholic Centre for Immigrants (CCI) support.

*Editor's Note: You can read more success stories at [cciottawa.ca](http://cciottawa.ca)*



# CEC PROGRAM

**The Community and Employment Connections Program helps newcomers integrate and adjust to life in Canada by helping them learn a new language, find a job and participate in recreational, sports and social activities for families and youth.**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 1,064 families and single adult clients were provided with services and programs that helped them with employment, youth leadership, sports/recreation, matching/mentoring, and learning English or French.
- Served 481 children and youth.
- More than 2,400 referrals made to local community organizations and services.
- More than 200 volunteers donated 5,400 hours of time to CEC programs.
- 240 children participated in a soccer program.





# RECEPTION HOUSE

**Reception House is a transitional home for refugees who are fleeing poverty, war and violence. Staffed 24/7, the home provides food services, common lounge areas as well as a warm, friendly environment where newcomers can feel safe and welcome. Staff help newcomers find their first Ottawa home and offer a children's program.**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Served 950 government-assisted refugees.
- Found housing for 718.
- Provided services to 582 Afghan refugees.
- Provided services in 6 locations.
- The 950 GARs served exceed our usual number of 380.
- Delivered some orientations virtually to Afghans who received Chromebooks.
- Served 33 immigrants who were referred to us by the City of Ottawa.







# WHY I VOLUNTEER

I believe that whatever I have is God's gift to me, and that whatever good that I do is my gift to God and to my fellow men.

I came across the Catholic Centre for Immigrants on social media. There I learned that the centre is committed to helping newcomers, most especially those who have been displaced by either war or persecution. I was deeply touched by this mission, so I volunteered with CCI. I am truly grateful to them for accepting me as I really want to help contribute to this noble goal.

It's been so spiritually fulfilling to be a volunteer with CCI for almost a year now. They have been doing an amazing job not merely by assisting immigrants in their needs, but also by providing them opportunities to thrive and become happy and productive residents of the Canadian society.

There is great joy in doing even the most simple things for the organization's clients like welcoming them, handing them snacks, and talking and playing with them during in-person activities like the Summer in the Capital and Picnic in the Park events. I get to see how their eyes light up and feel safe and warmly accepted. I love it when they smile and try to express themselves.

It is difficult to adjust and live outside their home countries, their comfort zone, so they need all the help that they can get. I believe that being there for them to offer humble assistance and consolation can make a lot of difference in their lives.

Aside from the social interactions, I also got the opportunity to do data-entry work last Christmas season. Even helping out in registering the clients' names for some wonderful projects CCI has, like Toy Mountain, gives joy to volunteers like me knowing that the deed would benefit the newcomers.

On a regular basis, I conduct English Conversation Circles (ECC) with immigrants to help them learn and speak English. As a former teacher, I find this volunteer work truly gratifying. Every week, I prepare presentation slides to make their ECC experience more enjoyable and productive. Hearing them gradually speak the language, albeit on baby steps, makes me happy.

I am also a newcomer here in Canada, but I don't see this as a hindrance to helping others. I believe it's the willingness to serve that counts. Indeed, it is in giving that we truly receive. I am so blessed to be part of the CCI volunteers.

- Ren Iporac

# WELCOME HOUSE

**Welcome House is a transitional home for homeless immigrants and refugees. We help them with housing, health, education and securing documents.**

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Moved 13 families (67 people) to private housing.
- Average length of stay: 3 months.
- Four families (25 people) were carried forward into 2022.
- Resumed in-person activities for Children's Program.
- We were able to relax some COVID protocols based on new government protocols.
- Home visits shifted to virtual or phone check-ups to ensure clients are supported in their settlement journey.





# SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

**There are two sponsorship programs at CCI. In one program, we work with area churches to support them in their sponsorship efforts. In our second program, we are a sponsorship agreement holder and we work with local groups to help them sponsor family members and refugees.**

Last year, we worked with 11 parishes to bring 37 refugees to Ottawa. As a Sponsorship Agreement Holder, we welcomed 14 refugees to our community.

# PASTORAL PROGRAM

**The Pastoral Program helps newcomers find additional means of support by connecting them to the faith community of their choice.**

In 2021-2022, we connected 46 families (123 people) from 12 countries to provide them with information about their faith community in Ottawa.



# YOUTH PROGRAM

**The Youth Program (CEC and Settlement) offers workshops and recreational and sports activities to young newcomers to help smooth their transition to a new community. The program helps them make friends, gain confidence and adjust to life in a new culture.**

- Free social activities such as holiday celebrations, art workshops, bike rodeos, and meet-ups.
- Recreational activities including a youth soccer league.
- School support during the school year with a weekly Homework Club.
- Support to expand their social network.
- Explore post-secondary school opportunities.
- Résumé and job search support.
- English or French language practice.
- Referrals and connections to other services in the community.

Last year, 313 received services or participated in workshops and activities.





# EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

**We offer employment services to help newcomers find meaningful employment.**

## **Community and Employment Connections**

The CEC Employment Team helps newcomers with their resumes, interview skills, job searches and understanding of Canadian work culture. The program is for newcomers who have a low level of English or who don't have a lot of work experience. It serves youth and adults. Last year, the team provided services to 346 people.

Our **Career Transitions** Program helps internationally-trained health care professionals find work in their field or transition to a new career. Clients take part in a three-week instructional program that teaches them about the Canadian labour market and work culture. We also provide job referral services and help them prepare for employment with resume and interview assistance. Last year, 71 clients completed the program. Seventy found work in the health care sector.

**Settlement Online Pre-Arrival Program** works with newcomers who are not in Canada but who have permission to immigrate. This self-directed program helps newcomers learn the ins and outs of the Canadian workplace, the labour market and more. 110 clients obtained employment.





# CIN PROGRAM

**The Community Integration Network program offers knowledge exchange and skills development to staff from Community Connections, Settlement Workers in Schools, Library Settlement Partnerships and other similar programs funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) across Ontario**

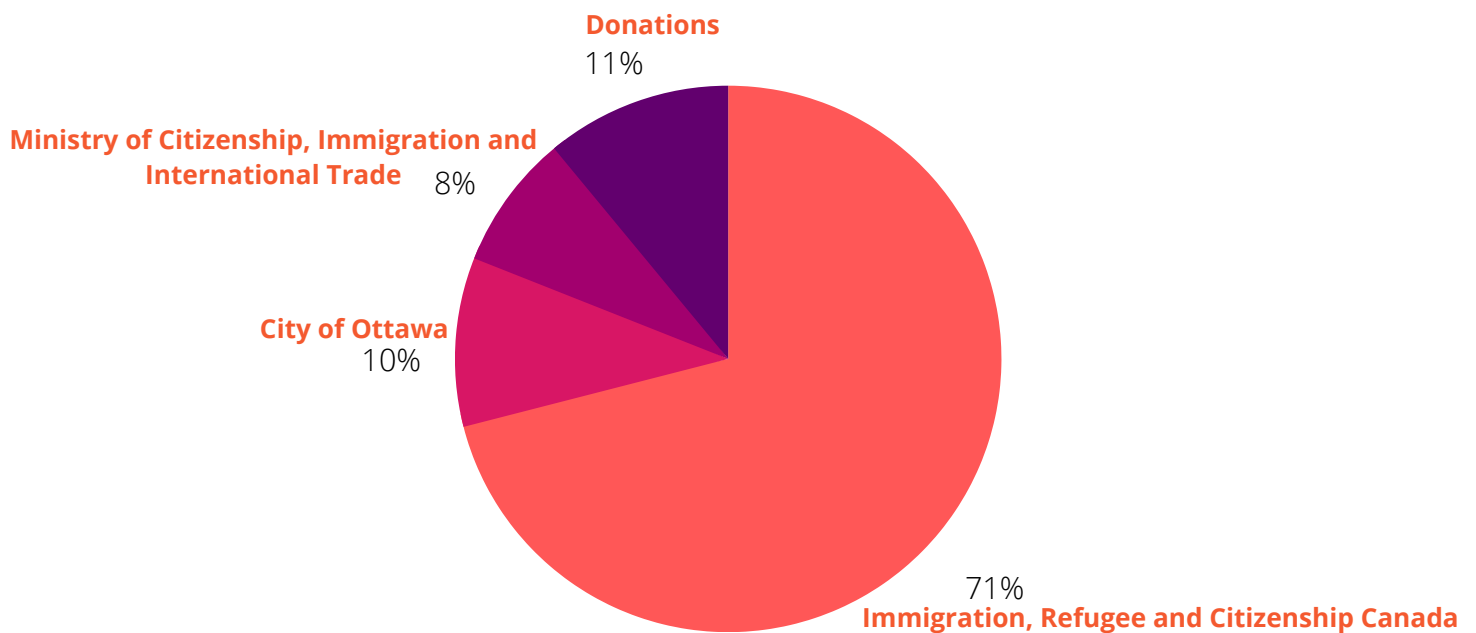
## HIGHLIGHTS

- The program provided opportunities to learn and to connect for more than 500 participants.
- The CIN team enhanced its technical skills and excelled at creating and delivering all aspects of virtual meetings and webinars. They produced and facilitated shorter, structured virtual sessions where knowledge could be shared while minimizing “Zoom fatigue.”
- CIN organized Knowledge Sharing Meetings to gather promising, practical, tested ways to support the use of virtual volunteers and to engage youth online. Showcasing Volunteers for Virtual Conversation Circles

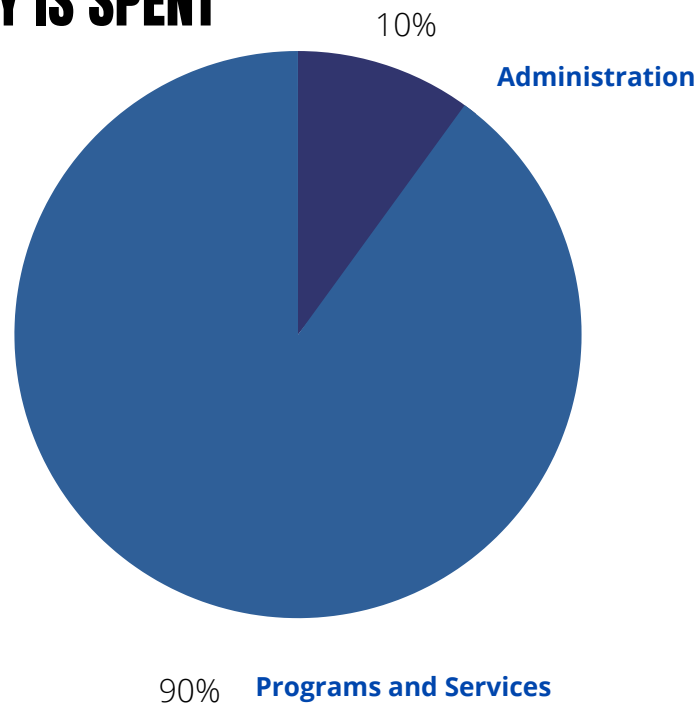


# OUR FINANCIALS

## WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM



## HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT





# FOUNDATION MESSAGE

**The Catholic Centre for Immigrants Foundation is the funding arm of CCI. We raise funds for programs that help foster settlement and integration and build a more welcoming community.**

Coming to a new country with different cultures, languages, traditions and even weather is a daunting proposition. So along with the taking care of the “nuts and bolts” of the settlement process, CCI Ottawa takes great efforts to add the “difference maker” programs. And this is where the Foundation shines!

Our donors help fund a multitude of activities that are not only fun, but are vital to building a strong sense of community.

The Foundation receives support from a variety of sources. Generous individuals, Catholic Religious Orders, churches, schools, service organizations, local businesses, and granting institutions.

The Foundation also receives goods-in-kind. For example, in the fall of 2021 a Knights of Columbus group from Kanata donated 36 brand-new winter parkas in a variety of sizes. For newcomers coming from warm climates, Canadian winters are difficult to deal with!

Youth activities are an important component of helping newcomer families adapt and integrate. CCI has been very successful running summer soccer programs, and the Intact Foundation

made a generous contribution to this initiative allowing us to continue with an indoor winter league.

Some of the most important work done with the support of the Foundation is our Sponsorship Program. This 100 per cent funded program works with area churches every year to help sponsor refugees living in conditions we can only imagine.

Every year we help 12 to 14 parishes sponsor anywhere from 35 to 45 refugees who are fleeing war, poverty and persecution. Many have been languishing in refugee camps until they are sponsored to come to Canada. They are from places such as Eritrea, Iraq, Syria and the Congo.

The support CCI Ottawa receives from the community not only helps with funding activities, but it is an important indicator that the work we are doing is recognized and valued, a message that we can share with our newest neighbours!



Jim McIntyre, Fundraising Manager

# THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR PARTNERS

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Ottawa Catholic School Board,  
Language Assessment Centre at YMCA, YMCA Employment Services,  
Connecting Ottawa, Community Legal Clinics, Legal Aid Ontario,  
World Skills Employment Centre, Immigrant Women Services of Ottawa,  
The City of Ottawa, Employment Ontario, Ottawa Police Service, Refugee 613,  
Interval House, Matthew House, Carty House, Ottawa Food Bank,  
Ottawa Public Library, Saint Paul University, University of Ottawa,  
Algonquin College, Community Health Centres, Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre,  
Ottawa Community Loan Fund, World Skills, La Cité, CESOC,  
the Vanier Community Service Centre,  
and Point d'Accueil Francophone (PAF).

