

Catholic Centre for Immigrants Ottawa

Annual Report 2020-2021

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President's Report

The fiscal year of 2020-2021 was one we will never forget. When we started the year, we were one month into a pandemic we thought might be over by summer. Two summers later, we're still waiting to see the end of COVID.

But we believe, as do many, that COVID has brought about changes that will remain with us for many years. There is no usual way of doing business. There is no return to normal.

At the Catholic Centre for Immigrants, we are in the midst of returning many of our staff to the office. But it won't be business as usual. We will continue to use a variety of online platforms to deliver services. We will continue to take advantage of remote work to expand our services deep into the communities where newcomers are settling. And we will continue to explore new and existing technologies to help us fulfill our mission – to help all newcomers reach their full potential and to help build a more welcoming community.

The transition we made would not have been possible without the dedicated leadership of CCI Ottawa's Executive Director, Carl Nicholson. Thanks to his leadership and vision and the commitment of every member of CCI's staff, we quickly transitioned to an online environment and were able to continue our support of newcomers in our community.

Staff at our two transitional homes, Reception House and Welcome House, continued to provide services seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Although heavy travel restrictions were in place, Canada still accepted refugees who needed our help.

We continued to make home visits with precautions in place and we provided food baskets and grocery cards to the most vulnerable families. We provided laptops to newcomers so they could connect with us. Every day, we continued to help newcomers learn a language, look for work, help their children in school, deal with emotional trauma, adjust to Canadian culture and make friends in the community. Earlier this fall, we provided school supplies to newcomer children in need.

Looking ahead, I know CCI Ottawa is well positioned to expand its digital reach. We have learned so much in the last year and we are going to put that knowledge to good use to better serve the newcomers who rely on us.

As Board President, I want to thank my Board colleagues for their insight and dedication during the past year. It was a challenging year for all of us, personally and professionally, but we found a way to come together.

The CCI staff deserve a standing ovation for their dedication and compassion. They, too, were presented with many challenges during the pandemic. They were not immune to the negative impacts of COVID. And yet, day in and day out, they were there to help some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Thank you!

Luise Czernenko Reid

Executive Director's Report

This past fiscal year was one unlike any during my time at CCI Ottawa. COVID-19 brought on many challenges. Many people experienced pain and they struggled.

When COVID restrictions were first introduced, it had an immediate impact on our clients. Some people lost their jobs. Some who ran businesses struggled to remain open. Others didn't know if they would have enough food to put on the table. Others went to work each day in high-risk jobs — delivery people, house cleaners, taxi drivers, bus drivers, grocery clerks, personal support care workers and other occupations that tend to rely on newcomers.

Young people struggled to adapt to going to school online. Like many of us, our clients suffered from the impact of being isolated and from the great uncertainty surrounding the future.

Due to language barriers and lack of access to technology, newcomers didn't always understand the changing COVID protocols. A study initiated by the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP) revealed that newcomers, along with members of racialized and low-income communities, were more likely to contract COVID.

Meanwhile, newcomers still had to deal with the challenges of settling in a community. Finding a job, learning a language, enrolling their children into school, making friends, developing a network and more. COVID made the settlement journey that more challenging.

To help newcomers during this time, we transitioned to a digital delivery service. Within 48 hours of the first lockdown, our staff were set up to operate from their homes. Whether it was through Zoom, phone or email, we contacted thousands of clients to find out what they needed and to let them know we were still here for them.

We beefed up our website, moved our workshops to Zoom, and created a series of videos in different languages to help newcomers make sense of all that was happening.

For people who lost their jobs, we helped them navigate the myriad of government support programs. We continued our homework clubs for students who were struggling with online learning.

For families in need, we provided grocery cards and food baskets. We provided personal protective equipment such as masks, hand sanitizers and gloves to those who were still working.

We also handed out Chromebooks and laptops to help people stay connected online with us and each other.

We worked with Ottawa Public Health to ensure the correct information got out to our clients about social distancing and then vaccines.

We did this while also ensuring our staff stayed healthy. We increased our cleaning efforts, put up signs encouraging social distancing, and provided personal protect equipment to the staff who needed to work in the office. All other staff were equipped with laptops and phones so they could optimize working from home.

Through OLIP, we studied the impact of COVID on the newcomer community as well as racialized communities to help the various levels of government develop guidelines that would ensure no one was left behind.

Although travel restrictions slowed the flow of refugees, Reception House and Welcome House continued to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Strict safety protocols were in place to ensure the safety of staff and newcomers. We staggered mealtimes and delivered food in containers. Our Children's Program was conducted online. We provided sanitizer to all clients and did extra cleaning rounds.

But as much as it was a year of struggle and pain, it was also a year of transition and opportunity.

We quickly realized that offering services virtually proved more flexible. Attendance increased for employment workshops and conversation circles. In fact, we were able to offer more conversation circles and expand them to almost every day of the week. Clients didn't have to worry about weather or find transportation to our offices in order to participate. They could join us from the comfort of their living room and at a time that suited them.

Going forward, we'll continue to deliver services in-person and online. Thanks to our investment in technology, our staff is also more mobile. In-person services will include meeting the client where they live or work.

We can't say thank you enough to the community support we received. Our volunteers continued to help newcomers learn English through Zoom conversation circles. Volunteers participated in homework clubs, computer training classes, art and recreation activities.

Our donors' support during this time didn't waver. In fact, they were there for us more than ever. Despite the uncertainty we all faced, our supporters continued to provide financial support to our many programs.

Our staff worked under difficult circumstances and delivered exceptional service. Our Board of Directors continued to provide sound direction. Our Board members took their task seriously by meeting regularly, working very hard, and providing excellent guidance and direction.

Below you will find a summary of the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

During the course of this past fiscal year, our permanent staff complement increased from 113 to 120. Our budget decreased from \$9,854,454 to \$9,758,449 and we ended the year with a net operating surplus of \$188,367.

- We housed 193 people at Maison Sophia House (MSH) and found housing for 139 of them.
- Integration and Support Services provided settlement services to 5,533 clients while its housing team supported 242 families with their housing needs.
- Our Client Support Services Program served 813 Government-Assisted Refugees.
- In Community and Employment Connections, 975 adults and young people were provided a full slate of activities.
- Our Pastoral Program helped 41 families connect with the faith community of their choice.
- In partnership with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Ottawa, we also helped 11 parishes sponsor 39 refugees.
- The Youth Programs at CCI delivered services to 287 young people.

- Career Transitions for International Health Professionals worked with more than 100 clients. Sixty-four clients obtained employment in the health care sector while five of our foreign-trained physicians received residency placements in Canada.

Additional highlights include:

- Participated in the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership Council with several other partners, including the City of Ottawa and the Local Agencies Serving Immigrants (LASI).
- Continued to sit on the IRCC Deputy Ministry Advisory Committee.
- Partnerships continued with Carty House, a home for vulnerable refugee women.
- Continued our partnership with the Vanier Community Services Centre.
- We continued to sit on the Board and Executive of World Skills, LASI and the Executive of Refugee 613.
- Our sister organization, The Catholic Centre for Immigrants Foundation, also had a successful year. During the year, the Foundation contributed \$299,534 to CCI's work while our sister charity, the Canada Centre, generously donated \$140,000.

Again, I want to thank our staff for doing such an exemplary job, for making a difference in the lives of so many people under challenging circumstances. Thank you to the many volunteers and donors. All of you have given us your time, energy, commitment, encouragement, money and inspiration.

A heartfelt thank you to our three church partners — les Filles de la Sagesse d'Ontario, les Soeurs de la Charité d'Ottawa and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Ottawa — who continue to provide us with generous support.

A special thanks to our funding partners — IRCC, the Ontario Ministry of Labour Training and Skills Development, and the City of Ottawa.

A thank you to the numerous agencies, organizations and companies who partner with us throughout the year.

On behalf of everyone at CCI, thank you for the opportunity to work together, to build a more welcoming community by helping newcomers settle, integrate and thrive. It was a unique year filled with challenges, but thanks to you, we thrived.

Following are brief presentations of highlights from the individual departments and programs.

Carl Nicholson
Executive Director

Integration and Support Services (Settlement Department)

Integration and Support Services (Settlement Department) helps newcomers settle and integrate into their new communities. We assess their needs, provide information on services, conduct workshops on housing, finances, transportation, education and more, and provide referrals to community resources. Some of our partners are: Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Ottawa Catholic School Board, Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est, 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, Helping With Furniture, La Cité Collegiale, Economic and Social Council of Ottawa-Carleton, and the Vanier Community Service Centre.

Highlights:

- Served 5,533 clients from 123 countries.
- 267 group sessions attended by 1,339 clients.
- Provided services to 605 refugee claimants.
- Top 5 languages spoken by clients: English: 31%, Arabic: 18%, French: 13%, Farsi: 5%, and Somali: 3%. Assisted clients in 22 languages.
- Top 5 countries of origin: Syria, Iran, Nigeria, Congo, and Somalia.
- In partnership with COSTI, delivered 42 Orientation to Ontario workshops to 531 clients; 12 workshops at the University of Ottawa to 209 international students through International Student Connect Project.
- 8 immigration lawyers and consultants offered free services to 446 clients.

Challenges:

- Many clients dealing with mental health, emotional trauma and distress.
- Helping clients deal with the family reunification process.
- Shortage of affordable housing.

COVID-19 pandemic impact:

- COVID-19 had a significant impact. Staff, working from home, had to find new service delivery tools and adjust rapidly to maintain the same quality of service.
- Many clients were not familiar with online platforms.
- Due to a range of pre-existing vulnerabilities, newcomers were at higher risk of becoming infected with COVID-19.

Settlement Youth Program

Highlights:

- Delivered 34 group activities such as life skills workshops, healthy cooking program, photography programs, art programs, driving licence workshop, first-aid training, computer literacy, legal information, individual counselling, settlement services, mentoring, employment and peer support programs.
- Worked with the Social Planning Council of Ottawa on the Photovoice Program that taught photography to newcomers.

- We collaborated with the Ontario Justice Education Network to provide a series of workshop on Navigating Police Encounters for Youth. This program aimed to teach youth about their rights and responsibilities when dealing with police.
- Partnered with St. Lawrence College, Employment Ontario, Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa, Somali Centre for Family Services, Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, YMCA, Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre, Centretown Community Health Centre, Vanier Community Service Centre, Algonquin College, University of Ottawa, Adult High School, and Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

Challenges:

- High number of refugee claimants who have limited access to services due to their status.
- Lack of entry level jobs.
- Zoom fatigue for clients who had already spent a full day in an online classroom.
- Many clients did not have access to a personal computer or were not computer literate.

COVID-19 Impact

Due to restrictions and lockdowns, many youth clients lost their jobs. This resulted in:

- Youth feeling isolated.
- Youth feeling disconnected from the community.
- Difficulty developing language skills.
- High need for personal computers.
- Less access to activities and physical activities.
- Clients experienced virtual fatigue.
- Increased mental health issues, feelings of loneliness and depression.

Housing Support Program

We have provided housing support services in partnership with the City of Ottawa since 2001. Services offered include advocacy, information, referrals, workshops, maintenance supports, rights and responsibilities, crisis intervention, and eviction prevention services. We help clients with finding a home, shelter services and emergency food support.

Highlights:

- With the support of the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Food Bank, we delivered grocery gift cards to families in need of food. 197 households (589 individuals) received \$9,300 in direct food supports.
- Served 242 households with 1,849 services.

Challenges:

- With housing tribunal procedures and regulations for financial aid programs constantly in flux, it was difficult to provide real-time information on supports available.
- Clients faced delays in having their status determined.
- Higher rents and a lack of affordable housing.

CCI Sponsorship Agreement Holder Program

CCI's Sponsorship program delivers information sessions to groups/co-sponsors involved in the refugee sponsorship process. CCI's SAH program manages CCI's sponsorship Agreement with IRCC which allows CCI to organize the sponsorship of refugees from around the world.

Highlights:

- CCI SAH allocated 25 sponsorship spots.
- Conducted information and training session for co-sponsors.
- Due to COVID travel restrictions, we received six refugees in fiscal year 2020-2021.

Challenges:

- Longer wait time due to COVID-19 flight limitations.
- Managing refugee and co-sponsors expectations.
- Completing applications and submitting it due to COVID-19 limitations.
- Coordinating quarantine plan as per public health guidelines.

Maison Sophia Reception House

Reception House provides temporary accommodations to Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs), homeless immigrants and refugee claimants. Newcomers are provided with information, counselling, a friendly environment, food, shelter and clothing. Staff help newcomers adjust to life in Canada and find affordable housing.

This was a full year under the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to protect the safety and the well-being of residents and staff, we implemented COVID-19 procedures at RH.

- Limited the residents from going in/out of facility.
- Set up daily screening for clients and staff prior to their shifts.
- Implemented a "no visitors" policy.
- Enhanced/increased frequency of cleaning,
- Installed more hands sanitizers dispensers and COVID-19 signs throughout the building.
- Strictly followed safety protocols and enforced them.
- Educated residents on "how to do hand washing" and more frequently.
- PPE (gloves, masks...) supplies for staff and clients.

Impact of COVID-19:

We changed the way we do business to ensure the safety of staff and clients.

- Ran a skeleton staff of counsellors. Three positions, cook, janitor and night staff, were deemed essential and ran at full capacity.
- Modified meal distribution. No more lining up. Served meals in containers.
- We spread out meal times and allowed residents to eat in their rooms.
- Increased sanitizing/leaning common areas, especially all handles and doors.
- Supplied masks to residents and increased the number of hand sanitizers in the building.
- Indoor mask wearing policy for all staff and residents.
- Housing applications and visits done online.
- Regularly contacted public health officials on updating our policies and procedures after two outbreaks in our facility.

- Home visits were done only once and on the day clients moved into their permanent home. Subsequent home visits were done by phone.

During the pandemic, we operated as an essential service to GARs and homeless residents referred by the city. However, we reduced total capacity to 35% as recommended by Ottawa Public Health. The number of GARs was substantially lower compared to pre-COVID-19 years. The number of residents referred by the city was also reduced.

RAP program and services under COVID-19

At point of entry into Canada: All new GARs received a rapid COVID-19 test and were transferred to a hotel for a 3-day mandatory quarantine in Toronto. Then, on day 4, with a negative result, GARs came to Ottawa to quarantine for another 11 days at our local motel. These GARs arrived with face masks, gloves and hand sanitizer. GARs arrived with some understanding about COVID-19. They received handouts in their own language. All were tested abroad before flying to Canada.

GARs in numbers:

Total GARs served: 193

Top 3 nationalities of GARs: Syrian 47%, Iraqi 14%, Sudanese 10%

Housing

Highlights:

- Secured permanent accommodation for 139 GARs.

Challenges:

- The average rent exceeded the shelter budget for GARs. As usual, they supplemented their shelter budget with Canada Child Benefit. For singles, couples and small families, combining these benefits still made it a struggle to find affordable housing.
- Larger families and Ontario Works clients found it more difficult to rent compared to clients who were working or had small families.

City of Ottawa clients:

- Provided temporary accommodation to 32 asylum seekers.
- Refugees from Congo and Nigeria made up 40% of the above residents.
- Secured permanent housing for 29 residents.

Children's Program

During the pandemic, we suspended in-person children's program. Virtual activities/school work for children were set up with laptops provided by schools and Ottawa Public Library.

Welcome House

Welcome House is a transitional home for homeless immigrants and refugees who are in need of a temporary and welcoming home. It is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Highlights:

- Carrying forward: 15 families (81 people)

- Moving in: 19 families (90 people)
- Moving out: 29 families (141 people)
- Length of stay: 102 days (average)
- Most of our clients are refugee claimants from various African countries, we also have a few newcomer permanent residents.

Housing Highlights:

- Found homes for 116 people (25 families).
- COVID made it more difficult to take in new clients and to find them housing.
- COVID-19 made in-person home/apartment tours very difficult. Many landlords were only doing virtual doors but clients were hesitant to rent a unit without seeing it in person.

Orientation & program support:

- Communicated with Ontario Works workers/Verification Specialists: leases, missing documents, rent and repayment issues.
- Helped register clients with Mathew House and Helping with Furniture program.
- Helped clients submit work permit applications/study permits and Social Insurance Numbers.
- Updated their address with the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Life skills & Home Visits:

- All clients who moved out received follow-up services, such as immigration documentation and settlement services.
- Home visits were suspended and we shifted to virtual phone check-ups.

Client Support Services Program (CSS)

CSS helps Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) during their first year of resettlement and integration. We deliver a mobile, intensive case management service that recognizes their complex needs. We work with the community to provide GARs access to services such as health, housing, education, language training, employment and various other community services.

Highlights:

- Supported 813 GARs.
- To keep everyone safe, our mobile services were put on hold. We provided intensive case management services by phone and used other methods to ensure all needs were addressed.
- Provided 16,217 case management services.
- Over 100 adult GARS received a computer or Chromebook to better access virtual language classes and community services.
- Updates were provided regularly and in multiple languages with regard to COVID guidelines, health recommendations and stay-at-home orders.
- Caseworkers ensured all GARs had access to food, transportation, health services and support benefits.
- Professional development trainings included boundary-setting, cognitive behavioural therapy for stress management, trauma-informed care; strategies for supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ clients; and purposeful practice case management.

Challenges:

- More than 80% of GAR arrivals had trouble speaking English.
- More than 30% had at least one family member with extensive health challenges.

- Employee fatigue and client disengagement increased as stay-at-home orders persisted.
- Computer literacy and technological support to GARs with no computer experience required many hours of one-to-one support.
- Online government and community services were not functioning at usual capacity.
- The emotional toll of the pandemic on newly arrived refugees in small apartments, with minimal income and limited social networks, had caseworkers acting as a sounding board for GARs feeling frustrated, isolated and distressed.
- The lack of in-person services prevented trust-building with clients to discuss sensitive needs. Caseworkers were unable to see all of the non-verbal communication often used to initiate delicate conversations.

Opportunities:

- Many skills have been acquired for working digitally. Staff are comfortable with virtual technology and are embracing the use of apps to teach GARs computer literacy online.
- Once a week, prior to our meeting, staff rotated to lead a well-being exercise for the team. This might prove effective post-pandemic to maintain well-being, team building and leadership skills.
- The Purposeful Practice Case Management project will allow staff to participate in forming new CCI practices for inter-departmental collaboration and improved client experience.

Community and Employment Connections

The Community and Employment Connections (CEC) Program facilitates social, cultural and professional interactions between newcomers and the community to foster community engagement and employment opportunities through a variety of programs, workshops, events and activities. With a combination of group settings and One-to-One (case management approach), the program prepares newcomers to find jobs; learn to converse in English and French and be able to access volunteering, participate in sports/recreation, mentoring and leadership opportunities. CEC consists of three streams of focus; Community Connections, Youth Leadership and Employment.

Due to COVID 19 restrictions, CEC staff worked remotely and offered online services and activities to newcomer clients. Through innovative programming and updated online content, the team proactively engaged with clients and supported them with their ongoing needs.

Highlights:

- 975 families and single adult clients were served a comprehensive array of services and programs that included, but were not limited to, employment, youth leadership, sports/recreation, matching/mentoring, English/French/employment conversation circles (adult, youth and children), workshops, cafes and information sessions.
- Served 518 children and youth.
- More than 3,700 hours of support were provided to CEC from non-client participants: 336 hours from volunteers; 2,520 from two paid interns through our partnership with the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO); and over 850 student placement hours from our partnership with Carleton University and Algonquin College.
- Over 2,900 referrals made to local community organizations/services.
- Due to COVID-19, all services, workshops, events and programs delivered online. One-and-one services provided by phone and social media platforms including WhatsApp, ZOOM, Teams, etc.

Challenges:

- COVID-19 negatively impacted the overall health and wellbeing of clients; in particular, vulnerable youth. There were financial burdens, unemployment, fear, loss of social connections, lack of access to in-person community services and programming.
- Clients unfamiliar with computers, online platforms or lacked reliable internet.
- Clients struggled to understand the current job market, language fluency/comprehension-job specific, online applications for employment, education and training.
- Volunteer recruitment was difficult as more volunteers were needed to address the increased number of clients. Impact was felt, but not limited to, conversation programs, youth leadership/mentorship, children's programming, volunteering and one-on-one supports for mentoring and technology.
- Many clients experienced trauma, discrimination due to their physical or mental health that created barriers to access services in the community.
- Families, children and youth struggled with various challenges such as online services/learning, online fatigue, finding space at home, scheduling time to participate, understanding instructions because of language barriers, impact on well-being, lack of technology skills, poor/limited internet and access to devices.

Opportunities:

- We see an opportunity to maintain key partnerships and create new ones to enhance CEC programming.
- Opportunity to develop blended approaches for in-person and online services to reduce barriers of transportation, and enhance the support to newcomer clients with activities including employment-career, mentorship, homework programs, English conversation circles, workshops for families and youth.
- Create mentorship and leadership opportunities to help youth reach their educational and future career goals.

Youth Connection and Leadership

Programing and services are tailored to youth, ages 15 to 29, to encourage social interactions and promote positive engagement for smooth community integration. Programs and activities include: sports and recreation, homework/education support, English and French conversation circles, leadership, self-care and information sessions to help clients make informed decisions about their future in Canada.

Highlights:

- Served 287 youth clients.
- Helped clients with computer literacy and online programs.
- With COVID-19, many youth programs and services were significantly affected. New programs and partnerships were created to meet the needs of the youth clients such as:
 - Homework support was delivered in partnership with the Newcomer Youth Leadership Development Program (NYLD) and the Adult Public High School.
 - A wide range of workshops were offered to provide support with interpersonal skills and communication, healthy relationships and social support in partnership with the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) with their Young Men Leading Change Project, The Sexual Assault Support Centre of Ottawa (SASC) and Hopewell Support Centre.
 - The Photovoice Project in partnership with the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO) created opportunities for youth clients not only to share their voice through an

artistic medium/pictures and videos to impact change but also benefit from their leadership program to become employed with SPCO.

Challenges:

- Due to COVID, many sports, recreation and outdoor activities were cancelled.
- There was a lack of mentoring activities to support youth clients with the much needed one-to-one and group assistance especially related to education and employment.
- Intergenerational conflict between the youth and their parents increased during the pandemic. We plan to address this through information sessions in partnership with other community services.

Opportunities:

- Due to increased demand, we an opportunity to work with partners to offer mentoring and leadership programming that will support clients in their employment/career planning and navigate post-secondary institutions, etc.
- Enhance youth wellness and self-care programing to help reduce isolation as well as intergenerational conflicts.

Employment-Career

The CEC Employment Program support adults and youth with low language skills and limited to no employment experience to increase knowledge and awareness of the Canadian labour market through individual and group services. We work with partner agencies to facilitate access to broader employment services, relevant workshops and information/training, skills development, career planning, increase networking opportunities and ultimately, with their search for basic employment.

Highlights:

- 240 clients served one-on-one; 181 participated in workshops on topics such as job searches, resumes, interview preparation, online applications, Canadian workplace culture, volunteering, and safety.
- Over 100 clients secured part-time and full-time jobs.
- Various strategies created to improve clients' knowledge of current workplace safety practices, including the use of PPE equipment.
- Employment Conversation Circles and mentoring activities were provided by volunteers to help clients learn a language and understand the terms around job searches and applications.
- We supported clients with virtual employment-related events, workshops and job opportunities from companies, including COSTCO, Old Navy, Walmart, Loblaws, Farm Boy, construction firms, Personal Support Worker (PSW) Agencies and the Agricultural Farm.

Challenges:

- Our clients' mental health declined because of COVID.
- Clients didn't always have access the proper technology and had poor knowledge of the hiring process, online navigation and application tools.

Matching Program

The program provided one-on-one support to help newcomers adjust and integrate into life in Canada by introducing recent immigrants and refugees to established members of the Ottawa community. Matches between newcomers and volunteers where carried out using various settings (i.e. one-to-one, family-to-family, or one volunteer with a newcomer family) with priority given to those with the greatest needs.

The Matching Program has now come to an end after 6 ½ years of success. During this time many wonderful events happened, thanks to the involvement of amazing volunteers and newcomers, both sides willing to learn from each other. The positive impact of the program will be felt for years to come.

Highlights:

- Recruited and trained 312 volunteers.
- There were 285 matches.

Success stories:

Some of the memorable events that took place during the Matching Program:

- Volunteer was present for the baby's birth 6 months after the match. Three years later the volunteer was on hand to celebrate the family's Canadian citizenship.
- Volunteer couple guided the father of a newcomer family as he worked to set up a now successful business.
- Volunteer matched with a sensitive case dealing with mental health challenges patiently listened to and referred client to appropriate services while staying connected to support newcomer client.
- Volunteer's children become friends with newcomer family's children, even celebrating birthdays and holidays together.
- Retired volunteer welcomed newcomer into his home every week, helping with his English and job search. When weather was bad, the newcomer would bring groceries and coffee to the volunteer so he wouldn't have to go out. Support given on both sides.
- Volunteer acted as a reference for her match, mentoring her once she succeeded in finding her first job.
- Volunteer couple visited large family with special needs children on a weekly basis, and then was part of a sponsorship group that brought the family's eldest child and family to Ottawa.
- Volunteer helped newcomer family access public library and recreational activities for her match.
- Volunteer matched with a young newcomer family, visited with them every Saturday, said that sharing their family meal was the highlight of his week.
- During the pandemic, a government worker was matched with a newcomer who wanted to improve her English so as to find a job, and also to integrate better into Canadian life. They met regularly on Zoom, but due to COVID restrictions never met in person. After 7 months, they met on Zoom again with the Matching Program worker to "close" the match. The volunteer's schedule was such that she could not continue with the weekly meetings, but she was clear that she intended to continue the friendship that had begun to blossom over the course of their match. The newcomer was thankful for the opportunity and to have met the volunteer. The newcomer client shared she had such a great positive experience and that she looked forward each week to their talks. She also shared that the volunteer was such a valued friend, who helped her understand Canadian culture, gave her so much encouragement in her job search, and that she always left the meeting with hope. She thanked CCI for its "great and amazing job" and hoped someday she will be able to return some of what she received by volunteering with CCI.

Settlement Online Pre-Arrival (SOPA)

CCI and World Skills are co-providers of the Ontario Settlement Online Pre-Arrival Program. The program's mandate is to deliver a variety of online courses to prepare newcomers for the Canadian labour market before they arrive to Canada.

Highlights:

- New data system (NewOrg) was introduced to better record information for SOPA program, funders and clients.
- 728 clients registered for services.
- 638 clients completed initial intake session.
- 451 clients were referred to facilitated job search strategies online courses.
- 192 clients were referred to facilitate soft skills courses focused on Canadian workplace culture.
- 326 clients enrolled and completed all facilitated courses.
- 660 referrals were made to self-guided courses related to working effectively in a Canadian environment to achieve career success.
- 478 clients received employment counselling.
- 60 clients successfully obtained employment.
- Referred 515 clients to post-arrival resources in their city.
- Referred 613 clients to mentorship programs.

Challenges:

- Number of clients who dropped out increased compared to last year due to pandemic and uncertainty of when they might arrive.
- Some clients were unable to complete all of the course materials.

Opportunities:

- We see a market for French-speaking clients.
- SOPA has created a marketing and networking committee that has allowed us to expand to the clients we reach as well as diversify the types of events we offer clients post and pre-arrival.

Career Transitions for International Health Professionals

Career Transitions (CT) helps internationally trained health professionals integrate into un-regulated healthcare roles. We help doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, laboratory and research professionals transfer their skills and experience and enter the Canadian healthcare sector. The program provided up to 36 hours of on-line training, opportunities in mentorship and volunteering, as well as ongoing resources and support. CT also works with community stakeholders and employers to fill the needs of their organizations.

Highlights:

- Over 100 clients accessed the program, 51 completed the workshop training.
- 15 clients began volunteering opportunities.
- 21 clients engaged in activities through our peer-mentorship program and through external mentorship placements in healthcare.
- In 2020-2021, the Career Transitions program exceeded its employment target, with at least 64 clients gaining meaningful employment in health care.
- Career Transitions clients fulfilled roles specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, as COVID-19 test administrators and COVID-19 clerical support. In March 2021, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) needed to urgently recruit a number of Medical Case Reviewers for the PHAC Vaccine Safety Monitoring Division. Career Transitions was able to submit 30 qualified clients from the Career Transitions program for PHAC's consideration.
- 12 clients pursued medical residency (CaRMS) and five were matched.
- Beginning in January 2020, social media and digital outreach were enhanced with the addition of a monthly e-newsletter.

- Employer partnerships during 2020-2021 included the City of Ottawa Public Health, World Education Services (WES), Shepherds of Good Hope, Bruyère Research Institute and the PHAC. Career Transitions has developed partnerships with over 25 employers across Ottawa.
- One of our most successful initiatives has been our Pop-Up Workshops. Between June 2020 and January 2021, Career Transitions hosted seven online workshops. These workshops focused on topics such as Financing Professional Development, Employer Networking, and Virtual Residency Interview Skills. In August 2020, we hosted a Pop-Up Workshop that had 63 participants! Attendance was for the seven workshops was 178 clients.

Challenges:

- Due to the pandemic, there was limited availability in hospitals and health care centres to provide observerships and volunteer opportunities.
- Many clients were unable to access the program as they experienced delays with their immigration documents.
- During one-to-one service, many clients expressed the need for additional settlement services such as childcare and housing support.
- The Canadian Residency Match Service (CaRMS) was affected by the pandemic in a number of ways. Firstly, the process was delayed and the timeline adjusted accordingly. Secondly, interviews were conducted online. Finally, some of the required exams for applicants were delayed and postponed, leaving some of our clients unqualified to apply this year.

Opportunities:

- Moving the cohorts online has created opportunity for networking among clients.
- Career Transitions staff continues to collaborate with organizations like CaRMS, the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA), the Medical Council of Canada, the Ontario College of Nurses and uOttawa Faculty of Medicine to connect our clients with licensing resources and information.
- Moving forward, there is opportunity to expand the role Career Transitions can play in systemic change. This includes highlighting the contributions that international health care professionals have made during the pandemic, quickly filling health care roles to support the pandemic response. There is also opportunity to advocate for improved bridging for regulated professions, so that these highly talented individuals can contribute even more to our communities, especially those in remote, rural and northern communities that may suffer from a dearth of qualified health care professionals.

The Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre (ONHC)

The Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre is a community-based initiative dedicated to providing holistic services that promote the health and social well-being of refugees and immigrants.

Highlights:

- ONHC was quick to implement virtual services during the pandemic, our providers continued to offer services via phone and video. We continued to offer in-person services for essential appointments.
- We partnered with many organizations to offer virtual info sessions on COVID-19.
- We partnered with Ottawa Public Health to develop multilingual resources and Public Services Announcements (PSAs) to ensure that communities who don't speak English/French had access to essential information so they could adhere to the rapidly changing public health directives.

- We worked with the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership to research the use of interpretation in the health sector and to raise awareness about the importance of language barriers.
- We participated in a national research project looking at the disproportional impact COVID had on racialized communities.
- In partnership with OPH and sister community health centres, we provided wraparound care to a client who tested positive for COVID.
- We took a lead in providing services to refugees who reside at the YMCA family shelter along with Centretown Community Health Centre and provided access to Covid19 vaccination onsite in congregate living spaces.
- We held various community vaccination events to ensure equitable provision of the COVID-19 vaccine, our objective was to ensure easy access and remove barriers to ensure immigrants, refugees and newcomers were getting vaccinated.
- ONHC also oversaw the distribution of the COVID Isolation Fund, this temporary emergency financial support intended for undocumented vulnerable individuals who are not eligible for social assistance programs and other federal or provincial income assistance, and for whom financial hardship poses a direct barrier to COVID-19 testing and/or completing a required period of isolation. Over \$80,000 of support was distributed to undocumented clients in Ottawa.

Community Integration Network (CIN)

CIN enhances the services offered to clients by Settlement Workers in Schools, Library Settlement Partnerships and Community Connections programs in the Ontario Region. In consultation with IRCC and in collaboration with settlement agencies across Ontario, CIN contributed to consistent, innovative and timely settlement services through the creation of tools, resources and professional development to support the effective delivery of day-to-day activities. The CIN team has also been useful to the sector and to IRCC by providing timely information and opportunities for service providers to share practical ideas on how to address emerging issues.

Highlights:

Youth Employment and Engagement

- IRCC, at the national level, convened a Youth Advisory Group (YAG), as a forum for engagement between newcomer youth and policy makers on key issues and priorities. The YAG did some research on youth employment challenges and shared findings and recommendations.
- CIN organized and facilitated three Zoom sessions that brought together colleagues from 30 agencies in Ontario. They met virtually with members of the IRCC Youth Advisory Group to talk about Youth Employment Issues. The participant feedback was very positive.

Knowledge Exchange Meetings

CIN facilitated four virtual meetings for program managers and coordinators. Participants shared, in brief presentations, new/different/practical ways to continue delivering quality services to their clients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Feedback from participants indicated the meetings were helpful in two ways:

- They learned about practical ways to continue service delivery in a safe and appropriate manner.
- They connected with their colleagues and shared some of their concerns and new ideas.

Mis- and Disinformation in Digital Communities

These virtual workshops were designed to help people spot and deal with mis- and disinformation in their digital communities. In these two-hour workshops, 50 participants from 32 agencies learned:

- How to evaluate and verify claims, sources, images and videos online;

- How to apply these new skills and tools to fact check a series of claims circulating online;
- Where to find trusted sources of news, multilingual fact-checking websites, and other reliable sources of information.

We collaborated with the presenter to develop a “Fact-Checking Toolkit” as an online resource. There are English and French versions.

https://cin-ric.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Fact_Checking_Tool_Kit-final.pdf

https://cin-ric.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/La_verification_des_faits_final.pdf

Challenges:

Impact of COVID-19:

Many of the activities in the CIN program involve convening groups of participants for professional development, sharing of promising practices and group discussions on emerging issues. They were cancelled for 2020-2021.

- Service delivery, program coordination and the interconnectivity of teams was affected by the pandemic. Participation in virtual activities for knowledge dissemination and professional development was affected by Zoom fatigue.
- Supporting the use of technology to deliver virtual services to clients was both a challenge and an opportunity.

Solution: The CIN team worked in close consultation with service providers and IRCC to deliver structured virtual meetings where knowledge could be shared while minimizing the virtual meeting fatigue for participants.

Opportunities:

Our colleagues across Ontario have identified areas where professional development would be welcome. The CIN team’s plan for 2021- 2022 includes:

- Gathering promising practices and creating resources to help other agencies adapt and implement them for their clients.
- Offering workshops and knowledge sharing sessions to reduce the impact of the unprecedented working conditions.

Pastoral Program

The Pastoral Program connects newcomers to their faith community.

Highlights:

- 41 families (119 people) from 14 countries were provided information about the faith community of their choice.
- A connection was made for a Syrian family sponsored by St. Columbkille’s Cathedral in Pembroke but who wanted to relocate to Ottawa. This newcomer family has a family member who is deaf. We connected the family to our Settlement Services program. They provided resources in the LINC program for the deaf. We also provided the newcomer family with contact information for the Ottawa Catholic Deaf community who are also available to assist with newcomers.
- Another highlight was helping a Syrian newcomer connected to St. Basil Roman Catholic Church. This newcomer applied for a job at the church. During a couple of meetings, we reviewed with the pastor the employment application and the queries the pastor had regarding the suitability of a newcomer and the responsibilities that come with this type of position. We came

to an agreement and the newcomer was hired. This pastoral outreach to our church leadership indicates again how instrumental our Pastoral Program continues to be in the lives of our newcomers and creates a bridge for them as they settle in our community.

Challenges:

- The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted our normal pastoral outreach to the newcomers at Reception House. Face-to-face contact was not possible.
- Many churches were closed and could not provide that immediate community support to the newcomers who were referred to them.

Sponsorship Program in Partnership with the Archdiocese

The Sponsorship Program works with groups who are using the Archdiocese of Ottawa Sponsorship Agreement. We help sponsors prepare and submit applications. We help groups prepare for the arrival of sponsored refugees and ensure refugees are connected to CCI services.

Highlights:

- 11 parishes sponsored 39 refugees from Eritrea, South Sudan, and Syria
- We helped the refugee sponsorship committee at St. Basil church prepare their documents and supplied the committee with the necessary tools to complete the forms for submission to IRCC. This parish sponsored three single Syrians who are currently residing in Lebanon.
- We connected St. Genevieve refugee committee and Good Shepherd church who combined resources in order to sponsor a family from Syria.

Volunteering

CCI's Volunteer Program provides valuable opportunities for members of our community to play an important role in the settlement and integration process for newcomers. Engagement with the Volunteer Program at CCI helps build stronger, more integrated, and more welcoming communities; and at the same time connects newcomers to important social networks; increases their knowledge of Canadian culture and the local community; improves language skills; and provides better accessibility to education and employment opportunities.

Highlights:

- Transitioned existing in-person volunteer roles to virtual volunteer opportunities.
- Identified and developed new volunteer roles that provided support to newcomers exclusively in virtual spaces, which included: providing support with learning technology; connecting newcomer youth with mentors using online communication; and offering English and French language classes online.
- Established the Volunteer Advisory Committee, made up of key staff members across all CCI departments, to provide input on decision making processes for the Volunteer Program.
- Introduced a monthly volunteer e-newsletter designed to provide volunteers with updates on programs and services at CCI; highlight achievements of CCI volunteers; promote the volunteer program and opportunities; and improve overall volunteer engagement.
- Improved the volunteer onboarding process by making documents and resources (such as orientation/training; policies and procedural guidelines) accessible online.

Challenges:

- Day-to-day onboarding (administrative/screening) processes for new volunteers limits the amount of time and resources available to focus on long-term planning.
- Hesitancy to work with volunteers in some department areas given the increased responsibility/liability and commitment of supervising and supporting volunteers who are working exclusively in virtual spaces.
- Ongoing need to increase the number of consistent and long-term volunteer roles/opportunities available across all departments.

Opportunities:

- Continue to develop and increase overall number of virtual volunteer opportunities, establishing CCI as a leader for virtual volunteering initiatives and opportunities.
- Collaboration with CSS and Settlement Department to ensure that volunteers are embedded within all departments at CCI supporting various programs and services.
- Increasing efficiency of volunteer onboarding processes by minimising administrative duties and recordkeeping and transitioning to more digital/electronic processes and tracking of volunteer records.

Communications

The mandate of communications is to support the strategic goals of CCI, raise awareness about CCI in the community, partner with the fundraising department to raise funds, and ensure consistent branding across all external and internal digital/print platforms. The communications coordinator also ensures timely and engaging internal communications.

Highlights:

- Purchased new video equipment and editing equipment in order to increase the number of videos we produce each year.
- Increased Facebook followers to more than 2,000.
- Produced 15 e-newsletters throughout the fiscal year to help increase awareness of CCI and raise funds.
- Produced a variety of communications products such as the annual summer newsletter, annual report, brochures, fact sheets, calendars and posters.

Challenges:

- Making time for professional development or training for new skills.
- COVID-19 made it more challenging to do interviews in-person as well as produce videos.

Opportunities:

- New video equipment, including a lighting kit will increase the quality and quantity of our videos
- With the pandemic mostly over (at the time this report was written), we hope to seize the opportunity to employ more communications interns from Algonquin.

Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership Council (OLIP)

OLIP is a multi-sectoral partnership involving 60 organizations working on a shared vision and common priorities to build local capacity to attract, settle, and integrate immigrants in five sectors: education, economic integration, health and wellbeing, language and socio-civic integration. OLIP partners include

the City of Ottawa, local universities and colleges, the four school boards, employers and employer associations, settlement, social, and health service providers, and regional planning bodies.

Partnership Development and Governance Highlights

- We moved to remote work and online partner engagements
- We paused regular meetings to focus on the health and wellbeing risks facing immigrants and racialized communities. Our engagement activities increased from our regular 15 meetings per year to 93 meetings per year.

Collective Planning Highlights:

- Identified 11 areas of need, addressed collaboratively by OLIP partners.
- Targeted protection planning, which resulted in COVID education initiatives in collaboration with immigrant communities, targeted vaccination strategies, voluntary and isolation centres.

Shared Awareness Development Highlights:

OLIP mobilized funding and partners' resources to launch six data and research initiatives.

- COVID Stories Project, an OLIP/Ottawa Health Team collaboration aimed at generating an understanding of the complexity of experiences immigrants faced during the pandemic.
- Two academic research initiatives commissioned through new funding.

Strategic Alignments Highlights:

- Pandemic response aligned to City of Ottawa's Human Needs Task Force & Ottawa Public Health.
- Economic recovery and talent strategy aligned to OLIP's economic integration priorities.
- Mental Health Response Strategy by Ottawa Police Service and City of Ottawa aligned to OLIP's mental health action plan.

Coordinating Actions and Curating Collective Impact

- Developed a new approach to community engagement aiming to leverage the networks, connections, and creativities of the three immigrant communities experiencing disproportionate COVID impact, including Francophone immigrants from Africa, Arab immigrants, and Somali immigrants.
- Expansion of Mental Health Counselling Walk-in Clinics to address the needs of Black immigrants
- Increased food security and technology supports to immigrants.

Development of Shared Data and Measurement Network

- Expanded the data partnership with IRCC to include the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Public Health, Ottawa Health Team, and Labour Market Information Council
- Secured new funding from the Community Foundation, City of Ottawa, and Heritage Canada.
- Established a new data strategy and plan.

Treasurer's Report

CCI Ottawa enjoyed another successful year. Total revenue was \$9,758,449 and total expenses were \$9,570,082. This resulted in a net operating surplus of \$188,367.

As of March 31, 2020, CCI had total assets of \$4,165,267 and total liabilities of \$2,291,001. The difference between these two amounts was \$1,874,266 that represented our net assets or equity. Net assets included the Building and General Reserves that provide for future building expenses or general contingencies and an amount of equity invested in fixed assets. The balance of \$1,000,514 was unrestricted.

Analysis of our balance sheet indicates that at year end our short-term position was strong as we had \$2.07 in current assets and \$2.06 in liquid assets for every \$1.00 of current liability. Our long-term position was also strong as our liabilities were only 55.00% of our assets.

We wish to thank the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Ottawa, les Soeurs de la Charité d'Ottawa and les Filles de la Sagesse d'Ontario, for their continued support of our organization.

Yours truly,

David Tobin
Treasurer

Related Organizations (CCIF & CC8)

The Catholic Centre for Immigrants Foundation

The CCIF develops and implements programs to raise funds for the work of CCI Ottawa. Although a separate corporation with its own Board and other structures, the Foundation is an integral and important part of the CCI Ottawa family.

Highlights: Raised \$444,679, contributed \$299,534 to CCI programs and ended the year with net assets of \$941,176.

8069697 Canada Centre

8069697 Canada Centre is a charity that owns and manages three buildings (219 Argyle Street, 204 Boteler Street, 30 Mountain Crescent) and is a part of the CCI Ottawa family.

Highlights: The Canada Centre contributed \$140,000 to CCI programs and ended the year with net assets of \$3,540,215.