

2021

ANNUAL REPORT



**Welcome, safety,
and support for refugees.**



LEADERSHIP REPORT

Years from now what we will remember about 2021 in the story of Christie Refugee Welcome Centre will not be COVID-19. This is true even though the global pandemic continued to dominate the headlines and impact our operations.

What we will remember is that 2021 was when we launched two of the largest new programs in our history, dramatically expanding our services and increasing our impact. For the first two decades of our existence, CRWC was primarily an emergency shelter offering short-term accommodation for refugees until they found housing in Canada. In the third decade, we added support to refugee claimant families for the first few years after they leave the emergency shelter, to help them get established in Canada. In 2021, our 32nd year of service, we launched the Elevate Employment program and the Centre for Refugee Children. (More information on these programs is elsewhere in the Annual Report.) These two programs will represent \$450,000 of additional services in 2022, impacting over 150 people, and we are grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Centre for Law Foundation, and many private foundations that have supported these causes.

In Fall 2021, as the Canadian borders re-opened we saw our occupancy levels rise, as refugees again began to enter Canada. COVID-19 has been hard on all of us but it has especially been a challenge for displaced people who have no home, and so we are grateful that we are able to serve them as they enter the country.

“Today we should be happy going to our new home but we are having mixed feelings right now. Words have failed us because we do not know the accurate words to describe how grateful and thankful we are. THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU HAVE DONE FOR US. We will deeply miss you. Please always remember that you are our first family we have in CANADA as a whole. God bless you.” - From a family as they prepared to move out of the shelter into housing.

What motivates us is seeing the lives we can touch by offering welcome, support, and hope to refugee families. The people we meet have had to leave behind their friends and extended families; they arrive in Canada all alone, and so we are thankful that we can be a first home and first family to them in Canada. Our hope for 2022 is that COVID will continue to recede and we'll be able to return to full in-person services. Thank you to all of our donors, supporters, board members, and other volunteers.

Sam Chaise, Executive Director
Alex Sancton, Chair of the Board



Sam Chaise, Executive Director



Alex Sancton, Board Chair



Above Image: Canada Day Celebration
Cover Image: Back to School BBQ

SHELTER PROGRAM



87
clients



59%
female



51%
children



14
single mother
households



132 days
average stay



17
source countries

TOP FIVE SOURCE COUNTRIES



Nigeria **16%**



Colombia **14%**



Mexico **10%**



Bahamas **8%**



Ethiopia **7%**

POST SHELTER SUPPORT



295
clients



5751
consultations



83
families provided
with services



191
workshop participants



17
families secured housing

PROGRAMMING & SERVICES



Children's Program

- 161 classes provided
- 25 children in the program



Women's Wellness Program

- 23 workshops
- 33 women



Centre for Refugee Children

- 65 children served



Employment Program

- 82 clients
- 42 actively job searching

2021 HIG



Grocery Gift Cards

Through generous grants from the Government of Canada, Second Harvest, Toronto Foundation and United Way, we distributed over \$100,000 in grocery gift cards to over 300 refugee families during the pandemic!

Bathroom Renovations

The bathrooms in one of our residents' buildings were rebuilt to be more functional and up-to-date for the comfort of our clients. This might not seem exciting to you, but to us new bathrooms is very exciting news!



Back to School BBQ

At Christie we have a tradition of celebrating the beginning of a new school year with a barbeque. This year we shared delicious food and provided the children at our shelter with new backpacks and goodies to prepare them for the year to come! Outreach also offered backpacks to any students who were recent residents.



HIGHLIGHTS



Mama Robertina's Retirement

This year, we said goodbye to Mama Robertina, who was one of the very first residents in our shelter and served on our kitchen staff for nearly 30 years. We are so thankful for all that she contributed over the years!

Community Garden

Our children and families got the opportunity to learn to plant and nurture their own sections of our community garden. This amazing team effort produced food for our kitchen and a beautiful garden!



Ride for Refuge

Our Ride for Refuge fundraiser was a big success, raising \$134,470! The Flynn Group of Companies team was the top fundraising team in Canada.

CENTRE FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

SUPPORTING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Centre for Refugee Children is a ground-breaking new initiative aimed at providing direct settlement services to refugee and migrant children in Ontario. The Centre has a particular focus on access to justice for those who are navigating the refugee claim process or other immigration proceedings.

In past years, approximately 400-450 children have arrived in Canada without parents to make a refugee claim. These children have not traditionally had the supports and services they need to move forward with their settlement. The immigration system is designed for adults, and does not always adequately protect children's rights and respond to their needs. The goal of the Centre for Refugee Children is to provide them with the immigration and settlement expertise to support both their immediate well-being and their long-term future in Canada.

Beyond the individual services they provide, the Centre for Refugee Children is also looking to create partnerships and explore new ways to better serve refugee children in Ontario. Some of the Centre's other aims include ensuring the rights of children are protected and their voices are heard, and promoting better access to family reunification for children who have come to Canada on their own, but have family in other parts of the world.

Isaac was 17-years-old when he fled to Canada in 2021 to escape the ongoing violence in his homeland and the additional risk of forced military recruitment when he turned 18. After boarding a flight on his own and then crossing a land border into Ontario to make a refugee claim, Isaac was immediately placed into quarantine. After a few days in quarantine, a local community organization contacted the Centre for Refugee Children about Isaac, and staff immediately began supporting him with his various needs.

The Centre for Refugee Children connected with Isaac while he was still in the quarantine program at the border, and helped him with his plan to come to Toronto, which included finding emergency shelter, registering for high-school, and moving forward with his refugee claim process.

After working with the Centre for a few months, Isaac has now settled-in to his new surroundings in Toronto. He has an immigration lawyer helping him with his refugee claim, housing accommodations with a community organization in the city, and he is currently attending school with plans to go to university in the future.

The Centre for Refugee Children is made possible through generous grants from the Law Foundation of Ontario, Hodgson Foundation, Gordon & Ruth Gooder Foundation, Rotary Club of Toronto, Bell Let's Talk, and Tippet Foundation.

"For these children to be properly supported as they navigate the immigration, child welfare and education systems in Ontario, a new initiative focused specifically on supporting and advocating for them was needed" - Steve Meagher, Director, Centre for Refugee Children



The Centre for Refugee Children team, Heaven, Maria and Steve

Children from
20
Different Countries

46
Children provided with legal and immigration support

44
Children provided with basic needs support



Centre for
Refugee Children



ELEVATE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

EMPOWERING JOB SEEKERS

Securing their first job in Canada is one of the biggest challenges faced by newcomers arriving in the country.

"Over and over again, I hear one of the most difficult parts of life here is actually finding housing and employment that can pay the bills," Megan Wilkinson, Elevate's Employment Settlement Worker, explains. "If you don't have those things in place, there's no way you can even begin healing from all of your trauma and pain. Finding meaningful employment is essential to being able to move forward with one's life."

Our new Elevate program, launched last year, works to empower refugees, help them build their confidence, and educate them on the job-seeking process.

The program includes workshops held every week with guest speakers on topics like resumes, online learning, college programs. Clients are also referred to various programs like language and employment training that can help them. For many refugees just understanding their options and having a sense of direction can be a massive help to them.

The program was brought to life thanks to a 3-year \$627,700 Grow Grant received from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The goal of the project is to impact 240 refugees over the course of the three years.



Megan Wilkinson, Elevate's Employment Settlement Worker



Mariam, An Elevate Client

Mariam was able to start a new job working as a Personal Support Worker thanks to the support of the Elevate program.

"I love helping people," Mariam said, when asked about her job. "I want to give my own share of help to people around me, in my community."

For Mariam, her job was her opportunity to do what she loved - helping others, and the Elevate program played a big part in helping her get that opportunity.

Initially Mariam struggled with writing a resume, but the Elevate program helped her, and taught her how to emphasize the skills she had in her resume. Soon she was receiving compliments on her "beautiful" resume and potential employers were recognizing the skills she could bring.

"The program has helped me a lot," Mariam said. "It helped me to be able to sell myself to employers. Megan has been so wonderful."

11

Clients found employment

13

Referred to pre-employment training



FINANCES



- **CITY OF TORONTO** 63.2%
- **DEFERRED REVENUE FOR AMORTIZATION** 3.5%
- **STAFFING** 64.4%
- **OPERATIONS** 1.3%
- **GRANTS** 25.2%
- **ADMIN** 3.6%
- **DONATIONS** 8.1%
- **CLIENT CARE** 15.1%
- **DEPRECIATION** 6.9%
- **FACILITIES** 8.7%

PARTNERS & DONORS

BETTER TOGETHER

During a year when our refugee clients acutely felt the disproportionate impacts of Covid-19, we are so grateful to the following key partners and donors who have supported our work in responding to our clients' needs this year: City of Toronto (shelter and housing services); Government of Ontario (settlement services); Ontario Trillium Foundation (Elevate employment program); United Way of Greater Toronto and Canada Post Community Foundation (after-school children's programs); Law Foundation of Ontario, Gordon & Ruth Gooder Foundation, Bell Let's Talk Community Grant, Rotary Club of Toronto, and Tippet Foundation (Centre for Refugee Children); Second Harvest Emergency Food Security Fund and United Way of Greater Toronto Emergency Fund for Covid-19 (grocery gift cards); Gay Lea Foundation (beds and mattresses); F.K. Morrow Foundation and Ontario REALTORS Care Foundation (capital renovations); Canada Summer Jobs (summer camp); Marantha Foundation (men's wellness & Refugee Highway Partnership); Andree Noiles Memorial Fund at Toronto Foundation, Shum Vourkoutiotis Fund at Toronto Foundation, and Willow and Grace Foundation (unrestricted); Daily Bread Food Bank and Second Harvest (food donations); Diaper Bank of Toronto, New Mom Project, and Holiday Helpers (gifts-in-kind); and the hundreds of individuals who share our compassion for refugees.



MISSION

We are a Christian organization serving and advocating for refugee families by providing safe, temporary housing, initial settlement services, and follow-up support. We influence and engage the broader public through education and advocacy networks.

CORE VALUES

We are *Christian*.
We respond to refugees with *dignity and respect*.
We are *resilient and responsive* to the changing needs of refugees.
We are committed to *children and families*.
We *partner* with others to serve refugees more.

BOARD

Alex Sancton, *Chair*
Taya Cook, *Vice Chair*
Peter Hopkins, *Treasurer*
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