

2022

ANNUAL REPORT



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



LEADERSHIP REPORT

It was December 2022 when I saw a simple, normal something I had not seen for nearly three years: CRWC Shelter residents eating a meal in our dining room. Since March 2020 residents had been eating meals in their rooms because of COVID. It was safe and necessary, but lonely. Seeing the energy and joy as people ate together was heartwarming, especially knowing that this larger dining room space resulted from a major renovation that took place relatively recently, in late 2020.

By the end of 2022 the reduction in COVID risk meant that much of our work had largely returned to normal. However, COVID has created a deeper impact that is still very much with us and will be for a long time:

- It is much harder to recruit new staff. Similar to other sectors in society, we are asking “where have all the potential new employees gone?”
- All of us have been through an extremely challenging few years, and it will take some time to build back levels of energy, passion, and resilience
- Canada is facing a mental health crisis, with substantially higher levels of mental illness compared to pre-COVID and a system that is nowhere close to being able to meet the need. This means that we are not able to access mental health resources for our clients.

More refugees are coming to Canada than ever before. For perspective: 2016 had 24,000 refugee claims which grew to 64,000 in 2019 before plummeting during COVID, but 2022 had a new record of 92,000 claims. Canada continues to be a place of safe refuge in a world that is increasingly fraught with danger for many people. CRWC’s response is to continue to strengthen our new and longstanding initiatives: the Centre for Refugee Children, our Employment program, Settlement and Housing support, Children’s and Women’s programs, and our core Shelter services of room and board.

As I write this in March 2023, I am on the verge of leaving CRWC for a new role related to refugees that is based in Europe. The Board has already appointed a new Executive Director: an existing member of the staff team, Manny Wong, took on this role on March 1st. Manny loves CRWC and is passionate about our mission and is already bringing strong, thoughtful leadership for our next season of service. I leave with gratitude for the faithful support of our granting agencies, church and group and individual donors, Board members and other volunteers.

Thank you,

Sam Chaise, Executive Director

On behalf of the CRWC Board of Directors, I want to offer our deep gratitude to Sam for his leadership. Sam has matured, grown and professionalized Christie in significant ways while keeping our mission for refugees centered. We are so grateful for him and wish him the best as he tackles his new opportunity in Europe.

Alex Sancton, Chair CRWC Board of Directors



Sam Chaise, Executive Director



Alex Sancton, Board Chair

SHELTER & INITIAL SETTLEMENT

FIRST HOME IN CANADA

Our Shelter Program serves families seeking refuge in Canada from all around the world. We provide them with a safe first home in Canada, assist them with their immigration process, and connect them with services and resources like ESL classes, healthcare, education and banking.

One family, after staying at the Shelter, connected with us to share a message of their thanks:

"As we move on to the next stage, we want to thank you for the opportunity and support you have given us so far.

We appreciate and will forever be grateful to Christie Refugee Welcome Centre for turning our fears to hopes and our dreams to reality.

May GOD ALMIGHTY extend his bounty blessings to this shelter and give them more strength to be a helping hand to more deserving people.

Once more MERCI INFINIMENT."

Our Shelter Program is supported by funding from the City of Toronto.



Benche, Carol, Veneicia, Sandra, Denise and Arturo form CRWC's Shelter team

TOP FIVE SOURCE COUNTRIES



Mexico **17%**



Nigeria **17%**



Bahamas **15%**



Colombia **7%**



Angola **6%**



156
clients



51%
children



64%
female



73%
single mother
households



225 days
average stay

FAMILY HEALTH & WELLBEING

PROVIDING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

The Family Health and Well-being services at CRWC are mainly run by Inner City Health Associates whose main mission is to deliver homeless families with health services and to address and confront the social determinants of health and homelessness.

Families who live at CRWC have the chance to meet any of our three doctors for a general check-up or for ongoing health management and referral as needed. This healthcare management often also includes mental health care.

A Toronto Public Health Nurse also joins the team twice a month to give vaccinations according to the Ontario Immunization of School Pupils Act, where students are required to be vaccinated against nine designated diseases if they haven't yet been given those vaccinations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, COVID vaccination clinics were organized to immunize clients against COVID-19 and its variants. Families are also informed about and referred to other health services (midwives centres, dental, optometrist, etc) available to them outside of the shelter and are informed about how to navigate them.

In September 2022, we received a couple from West Africa that was fleeing political persecution. The mother was eight months pregnant and had not been seen by a doctor recently. This couple needed to escape quickly and so ended up having to leave their three young children behind.

After a Family Assessment, the mother was referred to the CRWC clinic where she started receiving prenatal care, and another referral was made to a midwives centre because they had not submitted their refugee claim and so did not have their health insurance in place for a doctor's referral.

Her spouse received a general check-up, and was later referred to an eye specialist, because his eye was injured in their country during a political altercation that they were fleeing from.

With all the supports in place, the baby was delivered safely in October 2022. The family continued to receive health care services in-house until they secured private housing with CRWC's housing support and moved out 5 months later. They continue to work with their lawyer in the hopes of being reunited with their children.

We want to extend a big thank you to everyone who works at our onsite clinic to make the refugees at CRWC safer and healthier. Thank you Dr. Jim, Dr. Meb, Dr. Paz, Nurse Nicole and Nurse Marie-Claire for all of your efforts!



Dr. Meb with a medical student



CHILDREN'S AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

A PLACE TO BE A CHILD AGAIN

CRWC's After-School Program offers a safe place for the children at the Shelter from ages six to twelve to be kids again. The Program runs five days a week including on Saturday mornings, and has a variety of programs for the children, such as music, literacy, fitness, STEM and social programs to give the kids a fun and educational experience.



The Program is primarily supported by United Way of Greater Toronto, and additionally by the Gay Lea Foundation and the Kiwanis Club of Toronto Foundation. The Children's Program also offers a Summer Camp and a March Break program during these breaks in the school year.

The Program is always looking for opportunities to partner with outside organizations to give the children opportunities to try new things, and broaden their horizons. Last year, they partnered with the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) reading program, who had volunteers come in to read books to the kids.

A highlight was a recent visit our Children's Program paid to our neighbours, the O'Neill Centre, a long-term care home right next door to our shelter.

Our Children's Program workers had come up with the idea of having the children do a musical performance for the residents at the O'Neill Centre and reached out to try and arrange it.

The children in the Program were asked whether they would want to participate in this sort of event and they enthusiastically agreed. They began to make cards for the residents and practiced hard on choreography, African drum beats, ukulele and singing.

Before arriving at the O'Neill Centre, they were fully masked up and tested for COVID at the door. They handed out their cards to the residents, who happily accepted them, before they danced and played. The children brought an energy and grace to their performance and the result was an event that was fun for both them and the seniors.

When following-up with the O'Neill Centre, the first thing they asked was "when can we do this again?"

The goal is to start making these events a regular occurrence every couple of months.



The children's performance at the O'Neill Centre



HOUSING PROGRAM

FINDING A HOME FOR FAMILIES



The Housing Program at CRWC works together with families to ensure they are able to secure housing in the GTA and surrounding areas. Families are guided through the housing process through various workshops and one-on-one meetings, both while residing at the Shelter and after leaving. We also help connect these families with services that can provide them with financial assistance in securing housing.

Moving out of the Shelter, which for many of these families is their first home here in Canada, can be overwhelming and scary. Offering on-going support helps our families not only to navigate the system but reminds them that they are not here alone. The Program connects families to partner agencies throughout this journey that provide them with wraparound services.

The Housing Program is supported by funding from the City of Toronto, and the goal of the Program is to find each of our families a safe, happy place to call their own. Our Program is not just about housing, it's about home!

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Families secured housing

Last year, a single mother arrived at CRWC seeking support and emergency shelter for her family. While residing at the Shelter, she worked with our staff to secure a one-bedroom apartment for her family.

As some months passed, her once loved home became a place where she no longer felt safe or comfortable, as she felt someone was entering her unit while she was away during the day. She would return home and notice things were moved around and she decided to return to Shelter after several meetings with staff. She continued to work with the Housing Program to secure a new place to call home.

After several months, the perfect unit presented itself, and she was able to secure the apartment. The mother loved that it was located close to her child's school and that it was not only spacious but also affordable for her. There were more cameras on the property and this made her feel safer. The family was happy to be able to move in and have a fresh start.

She expressed her appreciation and gratitude for the guidance and information that she received along the way. She said that she looked at this obstacle as a new start, and she was happy that the CRWC team assisted her on this journey from start to end.



OUTREACH & COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Christie's Outreach Program was created in 2006, to address the ongoing needs of our clients after they had left the Shelter and transitioned into their own housing. This includes giving support in completing documentation, advice related to housing, and referrals to legal services.

Outreach also helps advocate for our clients to get referrals towards healthcare, and food, furniture and clothing banks, and workshops or social events. The goal of the Outreach team is to offer seamless support to refugee families as they intergrate into local Canadian communities.

In October 2020, a mother and daughter arrived at CRWC. They had come from the United States, where they had been receiving medical treatment after being attacked in Afghanistan by the Taliban. It had become clear that it was too risky for them to return to Afghanistan, so they came to Canada, to CRWC to seek asylum. Meanwhile, the father and two-year-old son were still in Afghanistan in hiding.

The Shelter team advocated on their behalf to get them housing, and they were able to move out of the Shelter and apply for permanent residency (PR). Around this time, the Taliban took over Afghanistan and the father and son were included in their PR application.

The Outreach team worked on their application and got it flagged as urgent, which helped the process move faster. Our team helped them every step of the way and provided support in dealing with this difficult, anxious time.

The team tried everything they could to make their case stronger and the process faster. They reached out to their MP and MPP, and kept calling Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to make sure things were still moving. Eventually the IRCC suggested that they would need to leave Afghanistan to make further progress. The father and son made the journey to Pakistan and from there everything went quickly and their visa was issued within two months.

Early this year, the father and son arrived in Canada and the family was reunited. They continue to face challenges building their new lives here, but they are happy to be together again.



Kerri, Samuel, Maral, Manuel, Estela and Joanne at Outreach Christmas celebration

425
Clients

5,510
Settlement Consultations



EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

FIRST STEP TO CAREER SUCCESS

One of the biggest challenges for refugees is securing meaningful employment here in Canada. The Employment Program at CRWC is designed to help our clients with that challenge as much as possible.

The Program was launched in 2021, thanks to a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The Program works to empower refugees, help them build their confidence, and educate them on the process of job-seeking in Canada.

This includes regular workshops with guest speakers on subjects like online learning, college and university programs and resume writing. We also refer our clients to different programs, such as employment training and mentoring.

The Program has already built up a collection of success stories. One of these successes is the story of Jamal Adeshola.

Jamal fled from Nigeria to the United States, but came to Canada to reunite with his wife and two children, who had previously stayed at Christie. Jamal connected with Christie after hearing about our Employment Program.

Jamal began to work with Megan, an Employment Counsellor, to understand his options and connect him with services that matched with his career goals.

"I have never ever had such pin-point career counselling and advice in my life until I started talking to Megan," Jamal said. "Christie doesn't just give shelter, they also try to give shelter mentally, to make sure you have full confidence in yourself."

Megan let Jamal know about an opportunity for paid training with Tierra, which had the possibility of leading to a permanent job. They quickly recognized his potential and he was soon promoted to a team lead position, with 19 staff on his team, and heading a project in Newmarket with Enbridge and telMAX.

Jamal is now working to get his Project Management Professional certification to take the success he has already had since arriving in Canada to another level.

"At Christie," Jamal said, "there is a lot of opportunity for people to tap into and get a feel for the Canadian hospitality, especially for newcomers, and people who are coming from very precarious situations."



Megan Wilkinson, Employment Counsellor



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Clients Found Meaningful Employment

79

Workshop Attendees



Jamal Adeshola, Employment Program Client



CENTRE FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN

Some refugee children arrive in Canada on their own. In an unfamiliar country, without their parents, they are expected to navigate the refugee claim process alone. In 2021, the Centre for Refugee Children was founded, as an initiative of CRWC and FCJ Refugee Centre, to provide direct settlement services to these unaccompanied and separated refugee children.



The Centre for Refugee Children is made possible through generous grants from the Law Foundation of Ontario, Gordon & Ruth Gooder Foundation, Hodgson Family Foundation, Tippet Foundation, Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, McClean Foundation, Alice and Murray Maitland Foundation, S.M. Blair Family Foundation, and Digital Lift.

Last year, Centre for Refugee Children launched the Child Representative Program, an initiative that trains qualified settlement workers and legal professionals to support unaccompanied children through legal immigration proceedings.

Over 100
Children served in 2022

22

Were assisted by the Child
Representative Program

In the months after the Taliban took over Afghanistan, 14-year-old Ali tried to flee the country for safety with his family, but due to the chaos and danger that enveloped the country, he became separated from them as they attempted to escape. Suddenly unable to contact his parents or return to Afghanistan, Ali somehow found the strength to embark on a long and difficult journey, which eventually ended with his arrival in Canada. After crossing the border into Canada at Roxham Road in Quebec, local child protection services contacted the Centre for Refugee Children to see how Ali could be supported if he was relocated to a foster home in Ontario.

The Centre for Refugee Children met Ali when he arrived in Ontario, and immediately began to support him with his initial settlement needs and his immigration process. Through the Centre for Refugee Children's newly-established Child Representative Program, our staff took on the role of designated representative for Ali, and assisted him to apply for legal aid and retain a lawyer during those first difficult weeks in Canada. Over time, trust was built and the Centre for Refugee Children was able to assist Ali to slowly piece together the details of his story that were central to his claim for protection in Canada.

While the complexities of the refugee claim process and the ongoing impacts of family separation on Ali made for a long and difficult process, after a number of months when the child's refugee claim was ready to be submitted to the Refugee Board, he received a positive decision. Now 15 years-old, Ali is focused on his studies, making new friends at school, and has plans to join a local soccer club. The Centre for Refugee Children continues to support Ali as he continues to adjust to life in an unfamiliar country, as well as the ongoing struggle of being separated from his family back home.



Jenn, Heaven, Maria, and Steve are the Centre for Refugee Children team



RIDE FOR REFUGE

HELPING US PROVIDE SUPPORT

Our annual Ride for Refuge fundraiser was a big success again. We were joined by six teams, who came together to raise over \$120,000!

The Flynn Group of Companies was the top fundraising team in Canada for the fifth consecutive year.

We are incredibly grateful to all the participants who put their time and effort towards this important fundraising event for us. It plays a big part in allowing us to give refugees the support they need to build their new lives, here in Canada.

The next Ride for Refuge event will be on September 23, 2023. Check rideforrefuge.org for up-to-date information on how to take part. There are both walking and bike riding options to participate. We hope you'll be able to join us then and continue to help us provide the support refugees need!



The FreeChurch Toronto Ride for Refuge Team



The Flynn Group of Companies (Top) and North Toronto Chinese Alliance Church (Bottom) Ride for Refuge Teams





Photos from our World Refugee Day celebration



Community garden (left) and International Women's Day event (right)

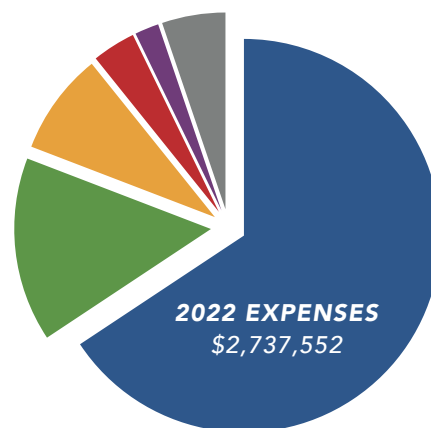
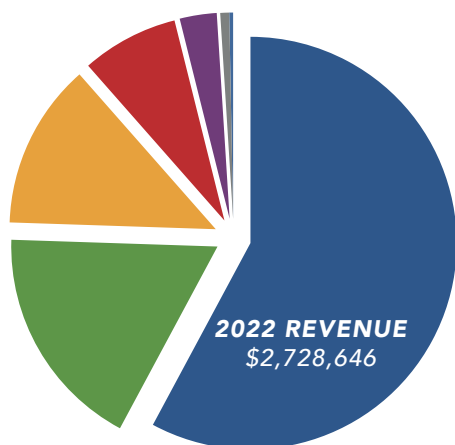


Multicultural Day (left) and Canada Day BBQ (right)



Pictures from the Children's Program's March Break camp

FINANCES



● CITY OF TORONTO 57.9%	● DEFERRED REVENUE FOR AMORTIZATION 2.9%	● STAFFING 65.7%	● OPERATIONS 3.6%
● GRANTS 17.7%	● GOVERNMENT OF CANADA 0.7%	● CLIENT CARE 15.2%	● ADMIN 1.9%
● GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO 13.0%	● OTHER 0.3%	● FACILITIES 8.4%	● DEPRECIATION 5.2%
● DONATIONS 7.6%			



Above Images: Christie's Back-to-School BBQ was held in September. Children from the shelter, as well as Outreach clients, received backpacks full of school supplies

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

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