

GETTING MORE INVOLVED IN THE CCR

Would you like to get more involved in the CCR? Perhaps you have attended a few meetings and feel it is time to get in deeper. Or maybe you are attending for the first time and want to waste no time in plunging right in.

If so, this guide is for you.

THE CCR'S MISSION

The CCR is committed to the rights and protection of refugees in Canada and around the world and to the settlement of refugees and immigrants in Canada. The membership is made up of organizations involved in the settlement, sponsorship and protection of refugees and immigrants. The Council serves the networking, information-exchange and advocacy needs of its membership.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

The CCR relies on members to:

- ▶ Share information about emerging issues and opportunities to advance the rights of refugees and immigrants.
- ▶ Contribute to the development of CCR policy positions.
- ▶ Advocate for the implementation of CCR policy recommendations.
- ▶ Educate the public on refugee and immigration issues.

GETTING STARTED

The following are the key places to get started:

▶ *The Working Groups*

The three working groups are the forum where the members network, share information, and develop policies and strategies for advocacy. The working groups are open to all to participate (with the exception of government representatives and media). Show up and speak up!

▶ *The cclist*

The CCR's listserv, cclist, is essential to stay informed and active. Cclist messages bring you the latest news, tell you about the latest advocacy initiatives and invite your input. Even if you can't make it to all the working group meetings, you can participate actively in the CCR by making the most of the cclist. To join, send an email to cclist@ccrweb.ca.

▶ *The CCR website, www.ccrweb.ca*

You will find many documents on the CCR website to inform you and to help you take action. The public education page offers materials that you can use to raise awareness. The website also has campaign pages with suggestions and tools for action (get organizations you know to endorse the Family Reunification Manifesto, meet your MP to discuss the CCR proposal for protection for trafficked persons, etc).

FOLLOWING UP ON CCR PRIORITIES

The CCR depends for its effectiveness on members participating in follow up on the decisions made by members at meetings. This means that we need you to:

- ▶ Ensure that your organization responds to requests for action, such as endorsing positions, writing letters to the government on specific issues, visiting your MP or Senator, etc.
- ▶ Report to the CCR office relevant information about how policies are being implemented in practice (e.g. respond to requests for case examples. Or report cases where policies are not implemented as the government told CCR they would be).
- ▶ Look for opportunities to advance advocacy on CCR positions (for example, opportunities to speak at meetings, to address politicians, to highlight an issue in the media, to sensitize potential allies).
- ▶ Look for opportunities to raise public awareness on CCR key campaigns and issues of concern (e.g. make CCR campaign documents and reports available at public events in your area. Collect petition signatures or postcards.)

IDENTIFYING ISSUES

The CCR also depends on its members to identify emerging issues and problems that need more attention. You should consider bringing to the CCR:

- ▶ Emerging issues that fall within the mandate of the CCR (e.g. the growing problem faced by Iraqi refugees in the Middle East).
- ▶ Issues that have tended to be neglected (e.g. the situation of immigrants with disabilities has recently been brought to the attention of the CCR)

HOW CCR ADVANCES ISSUES

There are a number of different ways that issues are advanced through the CCR. If you want to work on a specific issue, talk to others within the CCR about the best ways to advance it. Here are some of the key ways:

- ▶ Holding a **workshop** on the issue. A workshop at one of the CCR consultations is a great way to focus attention on an issue and educate CCR members.
- ▶ Putting it on a **working group** agenda. This is an opportunity to inform other members about an issue and strategize about what to do. The working group meetings held in between the consultations are longer and therefore there is more time to get deeper into a discussion.
- ▶ Developing a **resolution**. If the CCR doesn't already have a policy position on the issue, it may be appropriate to develop a resolution. Unless there is already a clear consensus on what the policy should be, it may be best to have a workshop or working group discussion first.

When CCR members agree that an issue requires attention, there are a number of ways that the CCR can pursue it, including:

- ▶ Raising the issue in correspondence and meetings with the government.
- ▶ Raising it with Members of Parliament (e.g. in a lobby day).
- ▶ Taking it to the media (see the Media Room on our website for examples).

- ▶ Researching the issue. (e.g. collecting cases of families kept separate by the excluded family member rule, Regulation 117(9)(d))
- ▶ Developing a report (e.g. *No Faster Way?* on private sponsorship, or *More than a Nightmare* on refugee family reunification).
- ▶ Use, develop and distribute public education materials. (see the Public Education page on our website for examples)
- ▶ Creating an ad hoc group on the topic. (e.g. committee struck to monitor implementation of the IRB's vulnerable person guidelines).
- ▶ Developing a project to go into greater depth. (e.g. the project that led to the Pathways to Gender Justice toolkit).

Which strategies are pursued will depend on what is appropriate for the issue, the level of priority given by the members, the level of member support and staff resources.

VOLUNTEERING

The CCR is constantly seeking volunteers for a wide range of tasks. Volunteer yourself for something that interests you! Don't worry if you don't have much experience: the people who look like they have lots of experience all started out with none. Team yourself up with an "old-timer" and you will learn fast.

Here are some of the many types of opportunities to volunteer:

- ▶ Becoming a *CCR Regional Promoter*: for people who want to become more involved in promoting refugee and immigrant rights locally, but who do not necessarily have an in-depth knowledge or familiarity with refugee and immigrant issues and the CCR. With the help of CCR resources and materials, *CCR Regional Promoters* raise public awareness in local communities of challenges faced by refugees and immigrants. They are also key players in reaching out to organizations, groups and individuals who are not already familiar with issues affecting many refugees and immigrants. For more information see: <http://www.ccrweb.ca/documents/promoters.htm> or contact Colleen French at cfrench@ccrweb.ca
- ▶ Organizing a workshop. The workshops for each consultation are planned at the preceding working group meetings held between the consultations. Each workshop needs a team of volunteers. Clear instructions are given and help is available. You can indicate your willingness to volunteer even if you can't make the working group meetings.
- ▶ Joining ad hoc committees. At working group meetings and on the ccrlist there are frequent calls for volunteers to work on specific tasks. Usually this involves giving input by email and sometimes by conference call, so you should be able to participate wherever you are in Canada.
- ▶ Standing for election as a core group member, a Working Group co-chair or an Executive Committee member.

REFUGEE PARTICIPATION

The CCR is particularly keen to promote and support the participation of refugees. If you are a refugee, you might be interested in the following:

Amina Malko Refugee Participation Fund

In recognition of the financial barriers which limit refugee participation, the CCR has a fund to cover part of expenses for a certain number of refugees to attend CCR meetings. Applications are invited towards the end of each calendar year to attend CCR meetings in the following year.

Refugee Leadership Development Program

The CCR created in 2005 a new program intended to encourage and support refugees in seeking leadership positions within the CCR. Applications are invited towards the end of each calendar year to participate in the program in the following year.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The CCR Youth Network offers a network for youth involved in the settlement, sponsorship and protection of refugees and immigrants; influences CCR policy by providing a collective voice through which youth can bring their ideas, objectives, and concerns to the Canadian Council for Refugees; promotes and support youth engagement in advocating for refugee and immigrant rights.

How you can get involved:

- ▶ Sign up to the Youth Network online discussion list at: <http://groups.takingitglobal.org/ccrjeunes> and explore the project space to find out what youth are doing across the country,
- ▶ Get involved in one of the Youth Network's projects. Some current projects include:
 - Setting up a scholarship for refugee and immigrant youth
 - Engaging and representing youth within the Canadian Council for Refugees
 - Ensuring youth access to services, such as counselling and education
 - Enabling youth voices on refugee and immigrant rights through creative media
- ▶ Help organize Youth Network activities before and at CCR Consultations
- ▶ Join the Youth Network Steering Committee. It meets regularly via telephone to coordinate Youth Network activities. Commitments to the Youth Network Steering Committee are for one year.
- ▶ Help to arrange youth meetings in your local community
- ▶ Connect with a local CCR member organization and help with their activities

To find out more about the CCR Youth Network and its activities, check out the online discussion space at <http://groups.takingitglobal.org/ccrjeunes> or contact Colleen French, CCR Communication and Networking Coordinator at cfrench@ccrweb.ca for more information.

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