



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 its members and allies 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.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED: START HERE

The following are the key places to get started:

- ▶ *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 front page of the website has the latest calls for action and the latest published information from the CCR.

On the front page you'll also find links to the CCR's campaign pages with suggestions and tools for action, such as: meeting with or writing to your Member of Parliament about the impacts of refugee transportation loans, organizing a public forum about new legislation like Bill C-49, promoting the CCR proposal for the protection of trafficked persons, and much more).

The public education page also offers materials that you can use to raise awareness:

http://ccrweb.ca/en/public_education

- ▶ *Follow the CCR on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube*

For quick, regular updates and interesting facts and articles from the CCR, follow us on social media. You'll find the CCR on Facebook at: <http://facebook.com/ccrweb> on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/ccrweb> or subscribe to the CCR's YouTube channels and receive notification of the latest video postings at: <http://youtube.com/ccrwebvideos>

► *Subscribe to the CCR Chronicle, the CCR's monthly electronic newsletter*

Want to find out the latest developments in immigrant and refugee rights advocacy in Canada? Want to know more about promoting the rights of immigrants and refugees in your community? Then you will be interested in the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) Chronicle – a monthly digest keeping you in the loop on refugee and immigrant rights advocacy in Canada.

To subscribe, go to: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/chronicle>

► *CCR member organizations in your area*

Interested in working with refugees and immigrants in your community? Find out about activities and opportunities to get involved with a CCR member organization in your community. Look under the 'Links' menu on the CCR website, or go directly to: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/links> to find an organization near you to contact directly.

► *The CCRList*

The CCR's listserv, CCRList, is an important daily information resource. CCRList messages bring you the latest news, raise questions that come up in daily work with refugees and immigrants, and tell you about the latest advocacy initiatives and invite your input. To join, send an email to ccrlist@ccrweb.ca.

► *CCR Working Groups*

The CCR working groups are the three main forums where CCR members and other individuals network, share information, and develop policies and strategies for advocacy. The CCR Working Group meetings take place four times per year: in February/March in Toronto, in September in Montreal and during the CCR Consultations in May/June and November/December (in different cities across Canada each year). The working groups are open to all to participate (with the exception of government representatives and media). Show up and speak up!

For more information about the CCR's Working Groups and to find out issues that they deal with, see: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/ccr-structure>

For information about upcoming CCR Working Group meetings, see: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/meetings>

FOLLOWING UP ON CCR PRIORITIES

The CCR depends for its effectiveness on members participating in follow up on the decisions made by members at its 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 Member of Parliament 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.
- ▶ Suggesting an **action item**. If the CCR already has a resolution on your issue, talk with others in workshops and during the Working Group meetings about actions that the CCR and CCR members could take to address the issue.

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. *The Future of Colombian Refugees in Canada: Are we being equitable?*, or *Welcome to Canada: The experience of refugee claimants at port-of-entry interviews*).

- ▶ 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:

- ▶ Take on a CCR campaign and promote it in your local community.
- ▶ 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 CCR 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 Working Group co-chair, a Working Group Steering Committee member 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

As part of the CCR, 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; and promotes and support youth engagement in advocating for refugee and immigrant rights.

How you can get involved:

- ▶ Join the Youth Network online discussion forum at: <http://forum.ccrweb.ca>
- ▶ Get involved in one of the Youth Network's projects and campaigns. Some current projects include:
 - **Debunking Myths about Newcomer Youth:**
 - This is a public education campaign to stop harmful stereotypes, ignorance, and racism affecting newcomer youth across Canada. If people understand newcomer youth experiences better, they might also be more supportive of finding solutions to challenges facing newcomer youth in Canada. To get involved, visit the web page at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/debunkingmyths/frontpage>
 - **Children and Youth Rights under the Canadian Immigration System:**
 - Canada has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, but the rights of children who are not Canadian citizens are not always respected in Canada. Detention, human trafficking, statelessness, family separation, and deportation are some of the areas where Canada seriously fails to respect and take care of non-citizen children and youth. The UN will soon examine if Canada is respecting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is a great opportunity for a national campaign! To get involved, visit the web page at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/youthrights/frontpage>
 - **Impacts of Missing and Mistaken**
 - Missing or misinformation on identity documents can have serious impacts on the lives of permanent resident youth. It often means no access to education funding, social services, support and resources. Many youth have little or no means of accessing documents to get through the long process of applying for new ID. We're starting a cross-Canada project to communicate this problem to the CCR and policy makers. To get involved, visit the web page at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/identity-documents/frontpage>
- ▶ Help organize Youth Network activities before and at CCR Consultations
- ▶ Join the Youth Network conference calls. It meets regularly via telephone to coordinate Youth Network activities. Find out about conference calls at: <http://forum.ccrweb.ca>
- ▶ Become a Youth Network representative in your community. Applications are accepted in the summer for one-year terms.
- ▶ 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 our our website at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/youth/youth-network> or contact Cynthia Beaudry, CCR Youth Coordinator at cbeaudry@ccrweb.ca for more information.

May 2011