



Canadian Council for Refugees Conseil canadien pour les réfugiés

Annual Report 2011-2012

Mission Statement

The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) is a non-profit umbrella organization 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.

Executive Committee

President - Wanda Yamamoto, Winnipeg
Vice-President - Loly Rico, Toronto
Treasurer - Yasmine Dossal, Toronto
Secretary - Rick Goldman, Montreal
Counsellors - Rivka Augenfeld, Outremont; Georges Bahaya, Edmonton; Huda Bukhari, Toronto; Jean McRae, Victoria; Gloria Nafziger, Toronto; Heather Neufeld, Ottawa; Freddy Wangabo, Fredericton; Eunice Valenzuela, Kitchener.

Working Group Chairs

Immigration & Settlement - Sherman Chan, Vancouver & Debbie Douglas, Toronto
Inland Protection - Chantal Tie, Ottawa & Francisco Rico-Martinez, Toronto
Overseas Protection & Sponsorship - Rose Dekker, Burlington & Elizabeth McWeeny, Thunder Bay

Staff

Executive Director - Janet Dench / Rob Shrophire
Office Manager - Guadalupe Macias
Settlement Policy Director - Marisa Berry-Méndez
Communication and Networking Coordinator - Colleen French
Trafficking Coordinator - Samanta Garcia Fialdini
Youth Coordinator - Cynthia Beaudry / Chloé Raxlen
Office Assistant - Victoria Beregoi / Beatriz Bonilla

From the Executive Committee

The CCR has been challenged over the past year to respond to an astonishing pace of policy change affecting refugees and immigrants. Our national leadership role has been more important than ever, at a time when advocates and others need to work twice as hard for a Canada that welcomes refugees. We have been kept on track by our guiding principles of seeking an affordable system, where decisions are made fairly and independently, in a way that honours our international obligations.

In this context, promoting a positive discourse about refugees and immigrants has been a key priority. We have set ourselves the goal of changing the negative narrative, which we hear too often, to one that recognizes and celebrates the ways immigrants and refugees have enriched – and will continue to enrich – this country.

To help us chart a clear course, we have begun a strategic planning process, under the leadership of our President, Wanda Yamamoto. This process will help to ensure that the CCR is as effective as possible in defending refugee rights and promoting welcoming communities. With regret, the Executive Committee recently had to accept Wanda's resignation, but we will be faithfully completing the process begun under her leadership.

During this past year we also benefitted from the leadership of Rob Shrophshire, who stepped in while Janet Dench, our long-time Executive Director, took a six-month sabbatical. He steered us through a hectic period of responding to new legislation and to painful cuts in refugee health coverage.

In a difficult time for refugees in Canada, the Sisters of Service shone a bright light of hope on the CCR, by donating one million dollars to allow us to create an Endowment Fund. We are honoured by this extraordinary gesture of faith in the CCR, which entrusts us with continuing the mission of the Sisters, who have worked over many years to support new immigrants arriving in Canada.



Executive Committee members and Working Group co-chairs with the Nansen medal 25 years after the people of Canada received the honour in 1986. The United Nations Refugee Agency gave this award for our 'major and sustained contribution to the cause of refugees'.

Highlights of Activities 2011 - 2012

Conditional Permanent Residence: Towards vulnerability and violence



What is being proposed?

A regulatory amendment stating that sponsored spouses and partners who have been in a relationship for two years or less at the time of applying for sponsorship would be subject to a period of conditional permanent residence. If the sponsored partner doesn't stay in the relationship for at least two years following receipt of their permanent residence status in Canada, they will lose that status, and could be deported.

What is this proposal for?

According to the government notice, the amendment would address cases of "marriage fraud", that is:

- Foreign nationals marrying Canadian residents in order to obtain Canadian permanent resident status and abandoning them on arrival in Canada, or
- Sponsor (Canadian resident) and sponsored partner agreeing to marry as a means to obtain permanent residence in Canada for the sponsored person.

Soo-Yon, from South Korea, met her husband, Chin, on the internet in July 2009. They got married after three or four, and a couple of visits in South Korea. Until then, Chin had been very kind, but on their honeymoon, Chin began to verbally and psychologically abuse Soo-Yon. In Canada, Chin told Soo-Yon to be subservient. Feeling like his slave, she had to do all the housework, and never let him sleep. He often yelled and threatened to send her back. She received just enough money to buy food, but wasn't allowed to buy anything for herself. Divorce is frowned on in South Korea, so Soo-Yon doesn't want to be very difficult for her to return alone to live there.

After an explosive outbreak from Chin, Soo-Yon left and went to a shelter. As she has permanent residence in Canada, she is able to continue her life here. She is taking French classes, works in a flower shop run by a Korean family, rents a room, and is happy to have left her abusive home. If the proposal for conditional permanent residence passes, women like Soo-Yon will be forced to choose between remaining with abusive husbands, or being deported.

Will it be effective?

No. There is no evidence indicating that those individuals or couples who entered to contract marriages purely for immigration purposes would be dissuaded by the prospect of remaining in the relationship for two years in order to obtain legal status in Canada.

Is it necessary?

No. For several reasons:

- It is not clear that "marriage fraud" is a substantial problem. Even the government notice of the proposal acknowledges that there is a lack of evidence regarding the extent of marriage fraud.
- Canadian visa offices abroad already devote considerable resources to screen relationships to be sure they are genuine.
- Canadian law has provisions to charge immigrants (even criminals) for misrepresentation in their applications.

Lucia came to Toronto from Bolivia in 2008 as a sponsored spouse. After 10 months, Lucia's partner - a Canadian citizen - abandoned her without reason. Lucia was left penniless and with little money, only the \$400 her husband was required to pay. Lucia refused to sign papers so that her husband could re-enter his legal responsibilities to her as a sponsor. She had to rely on friends for help. Lucia has been traumatized by this and chose to stay in Canada due to the stigma and shame she would face if she were to return to Bolivia because of her failed marriage. Since her husband left her, Lucia has been coping in learning and perfecting her English, in order to integrate into Canadian society.

If the period of Conditional Permanent Residence is enacted, women like Lucia will be deported, regardless of the impacts and through no fault of their own. Lucia feels that this proposal will also mean to use of women from other countries, only to have Canada deport them.

Responding to changes to refugee protection and immigration policies in Canada

The past year has been marked by big changes for refugees and immigrants. The CCR was active in providing analysis and comment, and keeping people informed about developments such as:

- > Reform of the refugee determination system (including Bill C-31, which received Royal Assent June 2012).
- > Cuts to the Interim Federal Health (IFH) program (the CCR partnered with medical professionals to oppose these changes and to correct misinformation causing confusion for healthcare providers, refugee claimants and others affected.)
- > Proposed two-year period of conditional permanent residence for sponsored spouses (which would make women in particular more vulnerable to domestic violence).
- > Proposed new directions in refugee resettlement to Canada (raising concerns about whether refugees will be selected for resettlement based on need and without discrimination).

Expanding resources to tackle trafficking issues

The CCR held a National Forum on trafficking issues in November 2011 as part of our efforts to keep NGOs working on trafficking connected across the country.

Launched in November 2011, the CCR resource database on human trafficking continues to expand. We have also started to publish a regular electronic bulletin on trafficking issues.

More recently, we were pleased to receive funding from the Canadian Women's Foundation to support the CCR's outreach and policy work on trafficking issues, and to hire a part-time coordinator, Samanta Garcia-Fialdini.



Participants discussed new ways to collaborate and share resources at the National Forum on trafficking issues in November 2011.

CCR Consultations

For the past two years, CCR Consultations have focused on values that we want for refugees in Canada - to be treated fairly and honourably, in a process that is independent and affordable. The most recent CCR Consultations, in Montreal and in Fredericton, were also opportunities to discuss recent policy changes, and how CCR members and allies can prepare for new realities to assist refugees and newcomers they work with.

Did you know... ?

CCR resources, commentaries and news are posted on:



Facebook
facebook.com/
ccrweb



Twitter
@ccrweb



YouTube
youtube.com/
ccrwebvideos



Participants at the opening plenary session of the CCR Consultation in Fredericton, May 2012.

We invite you to follow us via social media to stay up-to-date on our latest news and resources.

Highlights of Activities 2011 - 2012

Communicating with government on behalf of non-governmental organizations

Everyone is happy when separated refugee families are reunited. The CCR's relationship with Citizenship and Immigration Canada has allowed us to help several families over the past year. This relationship, as well as the open dialogue we have with Canada Border Services Agency and the Immigration and Refugee Board, allowed us to bring to government attention a wide range of issues needing solutions.

The CCR Youth Network grows: Youth Action Gathering, Youth Ambassadors and Speak Up!



The first-ever Youth Action Gathering brought together newcomer youth and youth workers to Montreal from across Canada in summer 2012.

The first Youth Action Gathering was the highlight of the year for the CCR Youth Network. The three-day event in Montreal brought together nearly 100 youth participants from across Canada. It focused on leadership skills development, media training and exploring questions affecting refugee and newcomer youth. Challenges in education for newcomer youth, access to healthcare and other services, and stereotypes and criminalization were key concerns. The Gathering ended with plans to meet more regularly through national meetings and online spaces. The next Youth Action Gathering will take place in summer 2013.

Youth Ambassadors were also active in 7 cities across Canada. Flashmobs were also

organized in cities across Canada in November 2011 to raise awareness of issues facing newcomer children and youth. Speak Up! small grants projects were developed and released throughout the year.

New publications from the CCR

Resources from the CCR are increasingly available online. Of particular note in the past 12 months are:

Used and Abused: Migrant Workers in Canada – a booklet highlighting abuses and exploitation within the Temporary Foreign Worker Program

The Experiences of Refugee Claimants at Refugee Hearings at the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) – a report exploring refugee claimants' perspectives of their hearings, impressions of the process and their overall feeling of fairness.

Receive regular updates from the CCR:

Subscribe to the CCR's monthly electronic newsletter, the **CCR Chronicle**: ccrweb.ca/en/chronicle

Encourage your organization or group to become a CCR member:

For more information on becoming a CCR member, visit **Join the CCR** at: ccrweb.ca/en/join



Nasteha, centre, was reunited with her mother and siblings in March 2012 after 4 years of separation. The CCR brought her case to the government's attention to speed up processing.



MIGRANT WORKERS IN CANADA USED AND ABUSED

Charged exorbitant recruitment fees, forced to work unpaid overtime, subjected to dangerous working conditions, housed in sub-standard living conditions... these are just some of the abuses endured by migrant workers in Canada.



Works at a fast food chain in North Vancouver, British Columbia

Because of their lack of permanent status and their isolation, temporary migrant workers are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. In recent years the number of Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada has risen dramatically to over a quarter of a million. There is no system for monitoring and enforcing the terms of the program. Thus, while many employers are respectful of their workers, unscrupulous ones may abuse migrant workers without facing consequences. Temporary Foreign Workers are employed in many different jobs. They may be cooking or serving your meals at a fast-food restaurant, growing the food you eat on farms or processing it in factories, or looking after your children.

The Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP) is divided into high-skilled and low-skilled categories. In the low-skilled category (where the abuses most often happen) there are three streams:

- Low-skill Pilot Project
- Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program
- Live-in Caregiver Program



**From the CCR
Treasurer: Yasmine
Dossal**

The past year has not only been difficult for refugees – it has also been difficult financially for the CCR. Despite our best efforts, we had a significant deficit last year, as you can see from the figures here. The Executive Committee has also recognized that we face a challenge to raise enough money for the coming year's budget.

To address this situation, we have developed a fundraising plan, focusing on monthly donors (Friends of the CCR) and one-time special donations.

Please consider making a contribution to these fundraising efforts, so that the CCR can continue to play a leadership role in working for refugee rights and a Canada that welcomes newcomers.

Endowment Fund

The CCR now has an Endowment Fund, thanks to a donation of \$1 million from the Sisters of Service. The money is being invested, subject to ethical guidelines, and the income used to support the CCR's mission.

We hope that others will make further donations to the Endowment Fund, or include it in their will.

The Canadian Council for Refugees is a non-profit charitable organization. Business number: 11883 0470RR 0001. Donations are tax-deductible.

**Highlights from audited financial statements for year ended
August 31, 2012**

	2012 (\$)	2011 (\$)
Statement of earnings		
Revenue		
Grants		
Government	34,883	118,442
Other grants	15,001	4,500
Donations	214,537	209,647
Dividend	4,474	-
Interest	1,714	2,269
Publications	393	737
Membership fees	53,316	62,603
Events - fundraising	2,989	6,488
Conference registrations	55,786	59,096
Total	383,093	463,782
Expenses		
Programs		
Salaries	220,278	218,899
Conference expenses	70,543	82,742
Executive committee	10,160	8,140
Working group expenses	22,555	15,653
Networking and public education	25,395	42,129
Administrative expenses	52,535	51,326
Brokerage fees	4,894	-
Fundraising	19,838	20,051
Total	426,198	438,940
Excess of revenues over expenses	(43,105)	24,842
Endowment Fund		
Balance at beginning of year	-	-
Contribution received as an endowment	1,000,000	-
Revenue: dividends	4,474	
Expenses: brokerage fees	(4,894)	
Balance at the end of year	999,580	
Balance Sheet		
Current		
Cash	159,497	128,394
Term deposit, 1.75%	25,000	45,237
Marketable securities (Endowment Fund)	999,580	-
Government grant receivable	3,118	45,147
Other receivable	12,634	5,780
Prepaid expenses	2,548	4,277
Total	1,202,377	228,835
Liabilities		
Accounts payable (note 5)	23,846	21,237
Deferred revenues(note 6)	92,847	78,809
Total	116,693	100,046
Net Assets		
External restriction (note 8)	999,580	-
Internal restriction (note 7)	20,000	20,000
Unrestricted	66,104	108,789
	1,085,684	128,789
	1,202,377	228,835

Copies of full audited statements including notes are available from the CCR office.

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November 2012