

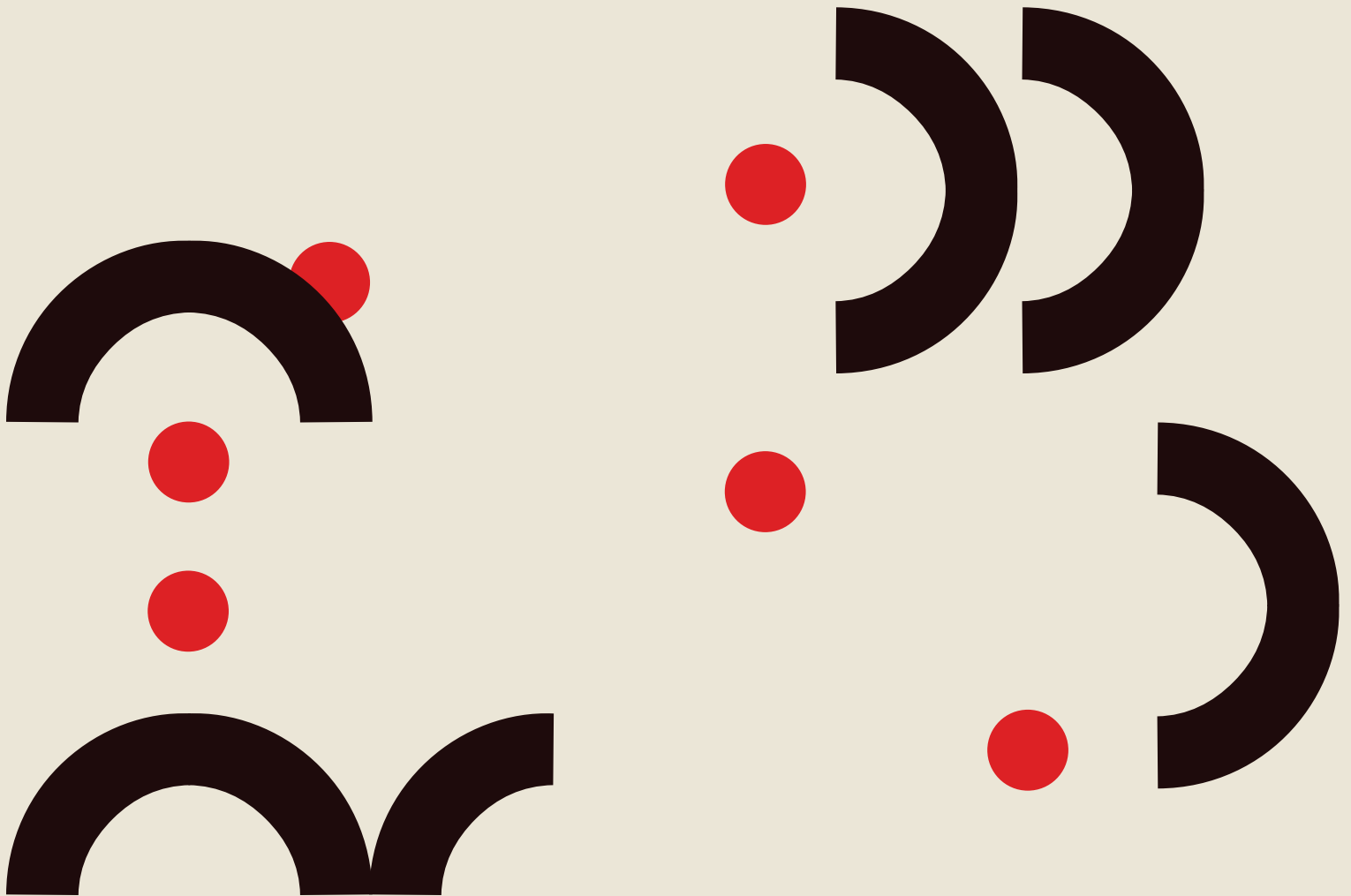


Canadian Council  
for Refugees

Conseil canadien  
pour les réfugiés

# Annual Report

September 2024 — August 2025



# Message from our President

Over this past year, the global community has witnessed persistent wars, genocide, and forced displacement in high numbers. The need to advocate for those seeking protection at our borders has never been more urgent.

Unfortunately, Canada has not been immune to the rise in authoritarianism, fascism, and xenophobia around the world. We have witnessed how politicians in Canada blamed migrants and refugees for a cost-of-living crisis that affects us all. We saw the federal government introduce major cuts to immigration levels and freeze the Group of Five sponsorship programs, leaving refugees stranded in horrible and insecure situations, and civil society, ready to welcome the sponsored families, with uncertainty and despair.

Despite the challenges we faced as a community and as a sector, the CCR and its members were there to respond and defend refugee rights.

As the country geared up for federal elections, CCR and its partners, along with more than 200 organisations, urged party leaders to uphold one of our best traditions: protecting refugees and welcoming newcomers. When Mark Carney was elected Prime Minister, we called on him to advance **five key priorities** including ensuring the right to asylum with dignity, protecting the rights of migrant workers, and reasserting Canada's global leadership on refugee protection.

However, Carney's tenure began with the introduction of Bill C-2, also known as the "Strong Borders Act," which introduced sweeping legislative changes that will seriously weaken refugee rights and open the door to discrimination, exploitation, and violations of human rights. CCR and its members have and will continue to fight against this dangerous bill.

As an organisation, the CCR experienced significant transitions in our leadership model while maintaining strong collaboration and connections with the wider sector.

On behalf of the entire Executive Committee and the CCR staff, I am pleased to present this year's annual report. We want to express our gratitude to the staff, volunteers, members, and donors for making CCR's work possible and our impact inevitable!

Our work doesn't stop, especially as we continue to battle against the rising tide of anti-immigrant and refugee sentiment and rhetoric. As we enter the next year, CCR is inspired and even more determined by the commitment from our members, partners, and allies.

Thank you for standing with us.



**Diana Gallego**

*President of the CCR*

# In Memoriam

In early 2025, we experienced a significant loss with the passing of our beloved Vice President, Jenny Jeanes. She was a passionate and dedicated advocate for those facing injustices within the immigration detention system in Canada. I was deeply moved by the outpouring of letters from dignitaries and civil servants sharing stories about her unwavering commitment to defending refugees and migrants and from former migrant detainees whose lives were touched by her intervention.

It was an honour to serve alongside her. Jenny was not only a dedicated human rights defender, but also a colleague, daughter, sister, mother, and wife. The entire Executive team will forever cherish the memory of her deep knowledge and compassion.



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# Who We Are

Created in 1978, the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) is a leading voice for the rights, protection, sponsorship, settlement, and well-being of refugees and migrants, in Canada and globally. The CCR is driven by member organizations working with, from and for these communities from coast to coast to coast.

Committed to social justice and transformation by challenging racism, colonialism and intersecting oppressions, we undertake policy monitoring, advocacy, network building, and public education to empower members and communities to bring about systemic change.

## Membership

CCR members are diverse settlement organizations, faith-based organizations, lawyers' associations, private sponsors, unions, and other organizations that work to protect human rights and welcome newcomers across the country. As an umbrella organization we serve the networking, information-exchange and advocacy needs of our members. In 2024/25 we were:

**203**

member organizations  
working with, from,  
and for refugee  
communities

**5**

associate  
members

**70+**

people at the  
National Migrant  
Workers Forum

**400+**

people at the  
November  
Consultation

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# Major Member Events

## 2024 National Migrant Workers Forum

The National Migrant Works Forum, “**Empowering Voices: Advocating for Migrant Justice and Reforming the Systems,**” was held in Ottawa on November 24, bringing together more than 70 people, amongst them migrant workers, faith-based members, settlement workers, students, CCR member organizations and staff, and community organizers. This forum enabled discussions on unscrupulous recruitment strategies that exploit vulnerable workers, as well as identification of effective remedies and advocacy strategies to combat these issues.



## 2024 November Consultation

The 2024 Consultation took place in Ottawa, from November 26-28, on the theme **Reclaiming Public Support: Building the Movement for Refugee and Migrant Rights**. CCR and its members know that there is significant public support and strong values in Canada to welcome refugees and migrants, but this support is under attack. Over 400 people came together in Ottawa from every corner of the country to reclaim this space and strategize how we can maintain and grow Canadian public support for policies that offer a meaningful future for refugees and (im)migrants.



### CCR on the Hill

On November 25, the day before the Consultation, over 50 advocates, from the membership and staff, gathered in Ottawa for ‘CCR on the Hill’, to meet with Members of Parliament, Senators, and senior officials to advocate for and reinforce Canada’s commitment to and compassion for refugees and migrants.



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# A Leading National Voice for Advocacy

The year 2024-2025 was a time of significant political and economic insecurity in Canada. Amidst a cost-of-living crisis that affects us all, refugees and migrants are frequent targets. In the context of continued negative messaging by politicians of all stripes and increasingly regressive policy shifts, CCR, together with members and partners, fought back in defense of rights and compassion for refugees and migrants.

## **Huge win on Section 91 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)!**

After ten years of persistent advocacy by the CCR, former Minister of Immigration Marc Miller wrote to the CCR in October 2024, to clarify Section 91 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which restricts who can provide advice or representation “for consideration”. For years, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had been deeply troubled by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada’s (IRCC) past (and incorrect) interpretation of the provision – fearing reprisals if they assist clients, and yet conscious of the harm done to vulnerable refugees, migrants and newcomers when NGOs don’t assist them. In his letter, the Minister confirmed that NGO workers are permitted to advise and represent people on their immigration applications, so long as no direct or indirect payment for these services is involved. A big win that proves the power of our collective voice!

## **Canada betrays refugees – CCR denounces the 2025 Immigration Levels**

CCR and its members were devastated to hear about the Canadian government’s shameful decision to significantly slash the 2025 immigration levels numbers by 21%. CCR had called on the government to increase its commitments to refugees in the levels to reflect the country’s values of being an open and welcoming society. With the government failing to live up to those standards, CCR explained how the drastic changes in immigration levels would set Canada on a dangerous course.

## **CCR decries IRCC’s decision to pause G5 sponsorship**

When IRCC decided to pause G5 sponsorship in November 2024, CCR expressed strong disappointment with the decision. CCR explained how closing the door on privately sponsored refugees makes no sense when worldwide there are more refugees than ever needing protection, and Canadians are willing and able to welcome them.

## Release of Anti-Racism Issue Papers

Between 2022 and 2024, CCR undertook an Anti-Racism project with funding from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF). CCR worked with our members, refugees, and newcomers through dedicated meetings and focus groups to identify 5 priority issues to combat the racism faced by newcomers and refugees particularly those of African descent. In January 2025, the two-year project wrapped with the publication of 5 issue papers in the following key areas:

1. Turning the tide on stigmatization of Black and other racialized newcomers in public opinion
2. Ending inequity in responses to global refugee crises
3. Challenging systemic racism and particularly anti-Black racism at the border
4. Ending inequity in processing of resettled refugees, particularly from Africa
5. Realizing the right to adequate housing for racialized refugees and newcomers

The issue papers can be accessed [here](#).

## Protecting the Right to Asylum in a Closing World: Reflecting on the 40th Anniversary of Refugee Rights Day

CCR hosted an in-person and virtual event in collaboration with the University of Ottawa's Centre for International Policy Studies, and the Human Rights Research and Education Centre to commemorate Refugee Rights Day in Canada and the 40th anniversary of the Singh Decision.



*The event was dedicated to the late Jenny Jeanes, a passionate and fearless advocate for refugee and migrant rights, who passed away in March 2025. Jenny was one of Canada's leading experts on immigration detention and as CCR's Vice President and as the Detention Program Coordinator at Action Réfugiés Montréal, her devotion to lifting the voices of people with lived experience and strengthening our work in the sector knew no bounds. She is incredibly missed.*



## IRCC-CCR-CBSA Roundtable

The CCR meets twice a year with IRCC and the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) after our Spring and Fall Working Group Meetings, in high-level roundtable meetings that support dialogue and advocacy on key priorities of the sector. On May 26, 2025, the CCR met with IRCC and CBSA, in Ottawa, to discuss topics such as global resettlement challenges, interim housing for asylum seekers, concerns with CBSA's removals strategy, the state of the settlement sector, amongst others. The discussions generated, several follow-up action items and commitments ranging from meetings to address concerns related to work permits and the processing of dependents of protected persons, to discussions on the challenges of exit permits for refugees awaiting resettlement to Canada and follow up with CBSA in relation to the concerning situation we are observing with the treatment of claimants at the border.

## CCR and Lush Cosmetics partner on a campaign!

When a global cosmetic brand chooses to stand publicly with refugees and migrants, it signals something shifting in how Canadians want to show up. On July 3rd, 2025, Lush Cosmetics launched their "Better Neighbours: Building the Communities We Need" campaign, that was co-created with CCR. The campaign promoted refugee and immigrant rights by tackling the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment across Canada. The proceeds from the special edition product, the Resilient Bath Bomb, were used towards our national campaign to reclaim public support for refugee and migrant rights. To read CCR's accompanying article, please click [here](#).



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# We Did Not Back Down

## The ongoing genocide of Palestinians

In April 2025, the CCR hosted a virtual webinar to explore “Ongoing Palestinian Displacement: BDS as a Call to Action” where Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement (BDS) for Palestinian rights and a recipient of the 2017 Gandhi Peace Award, spoke about what BDS entail and why Palestinians selected it as their main call to action for meaning solidarity.

CCR released a statement in June 2025 calling on the government to take immediate action to stop the ongoing genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in Gaza at the hands of the Israeli government.

CCR also became signatory on the #ArmsEmbargoNow campaign, calling on the Canadian government to impose a full, and immediate two-way arms embargo on Israel. The campaign was accompanied by a report that uncovered the hundreds of shipments of weapons being exported from Canada to Israel.

## Rising anti-immigrant discourse in Canada

The rise in anti-immigrant discourse in Canada has been a strong concern this year, particularly at a time when it is more important than ever for our political leaders to uphold our core identity as a welcoming country. As the federal elections loomed in the spring of 2025, CCR wrote an [open letter](#) to all party leaders, urging them to recommit themselves to defending and strengthening Canada’s best traditions: protecting refugees and welcoming newcomers.

With the election of the new prime minister, Mark Carney, in March 2025, CCR made [an appeal](#) to the new government urging action and offering our support in the following five key areas:

1. Reclaiming the Narrative of Canada as a Welcoming Nation
2. Reasserting Canada’s Global leadership on Refugees
3. Ensuring the Right to Asylum with Dignity
4. Upholding Rights for Temporary Residents and Migrant Workers
5. Working in Partnership for Tested Solutions

### Open Letter to Party Leaders

Mark Carney, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada  
Pierre Poilievre, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada  
Yves-François Blanchet, Leader of the Bloc Québécois  
Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada  
Elizabeth May and Jonathan Pedneault, Co-Leaders of the Green Party of Canada

Dear Party Leaders,

Elections are a perilous time for marginalized groups. At a time of significant national political and economic insecurity and amidst a cost-of-living crisis that affects us all, refugees and migrants have been frequent targets. As the federal election approaches, we are writing to seek your commitment to reject this scapegoating, and defend and strengthen one of Canada’s best traditions: protecting refugees and welcoming newcomers.

Political leaders play a critical role in upholding the rights of immigrants and refugees. This responsibility is particularly important today, when we see the rise around the world of xenophobic fear-mongering about people who move in search of a better life for their families. Canada is not immune to these narratives.

## Bill C-2/C-12

CCR was deeply alarmed with the multiple dangerous precedents that would be set if Bill C-2 (now Bill C-12), the *Strong Borders Act*, became law and helped launch a major cross sector coalition to fight the bill. This bill represents a drastic shift in how Canada responds to refugees seeking protection in this country and is accompanied by a dangerous, fear mongering rhetoric that makes all of us less safe.

CCR published briefing material, spoke out in the media, launched an action and letter writing campaign, and continues to advocate for the government to rescind this bill.

## Deteriorating situation in the US for refugees and migrants—the STCA must end

CCR and its members have watched in horror as the Trump Administration in the United States has implemented extreme anti-immigrant and anti-asylum orders that instill fear and make the U.S. an unsafe place for those seeking protection. With the chaos that continues to happen south of our borders, CCR **continues to advocate** that the Canadian government withdraw from the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA). Whether its speaking in the media, writing to Ministers, launching petitions, or moving forward with legal challenges against the STCA, CCR and its community of advocates have fiercely **spoken against** the STCA and Canada's obligations safeguard refugee and migrant rights.

### On this World Refugee Day, Call on the Canadian Government to Withdraw from the STCA

June 20, 2025

The Canadian Sanctuary Network, Bridges Not Borders, and the Canadian Council for Refugees have issued an open letter calling on civil society partners to join us in demanding an end to the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) between Canada and the United States.

Since 2004, Canada has designated the United States as a safe country for refugees, under the STCA between the two countries. This agreement has effectively closed the door on most refugee claimants presenting themselves at the US-Canada border. They are sent back to the US, where many are put into immigration detention.

Canada's continued participation in the STCA means that Canada is effectively endorsing U.S. policies to end refugee protection and deport people to places where they are at risk of persecution, torture, and death.

### CCR renews call for Canada to withdraw from STCA in joint statement

Canada must withdraw from STCA: under Trump US is less safe than ever for refugees

Feb. 4, 2025

Canada must urgently withdraw from the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) given the dire situation facing refugees in the United States, the Canadian Council for Refugees and Amnesty International Canada said today.

The Safe Third Country Agreement between Canada and the United States bars most people crossing into Canada via the United States from seeking refugee protection in Canada. Under the agreement – which is premised on the notion that both countries reliably respect people's right to seek asylum – people entering Canada via the U.S. to make a refugee claim here are usually turned back at the border.

"President Trump's extreme anti-immigrant and anti-asylum orders are designed to instill fear and make the U.S. dangerously more unsafe for those seeking protection," said Ketty Noyabandi, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada's English-speaking section. "Canada's assertion that the United States remains a safe country for refugees under the Trump administration is a cruel irony to those fleeing persecution today. It must be urgently rescinded, and tariffs threats must not blur the plight of those in immediate risk."

# Resolutions

During the Annual General Meeting at the 2024 Consultation in Ottawa, CCR passed the following resolutions:

- **Protection of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (read [here](#))**
- **Better Protection and Supports for International Students (read [here](#))**
- **Fair Treatment of Migrants with Temporary Status in Canada Affected by Immigration Policy Changes (read [here](#))**

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# Where our members turn concerns into priorities

The three Working Groups are the forums in which CCR members exchange information, network and develop policy positions in particular areas of concern. They are responsible for preparing resolutions and planning workshops at the consultations, as well as for advising the Executive on policy.

The Working Groups meet three times a year.

This year, Working Group Meetings took place in September 2024 in Montreal, November 2024 in Ottawa for the Consultation, and in April 2025 in Toronto.

## **Immigration and Settlement**

The Immigrant and Settlement (I&S) Working Group focused on the following priorities:

- Access to services (health, education, settlement, language, employment, housing)
- Precarious and exploited migrant workers
- Support for the rights and needs of populations at risk of deportation (Regularization)

## **Inland Protection**

The Inland Protection (IP) Working Group focused on the following priorities:

- Access to the refugee claim process (includes STCA and other policy measures that block access to claiming refugee status)
- Asylum with Dignity Campaign (housing, legal aid, settlement services, reception centres, front-end processing)
- Public support for refugee claimants and migrants

Refugee claimant processing was identified as an internal priority.

## **Overseas Protection and Resettlement**

The Overseas Protection and Resettlement (OPR) Working Group focused on the following priorities:

- Equity (in processing of resettlement applications and in responses to emergencies)
- Reduced access to resettlement (addressing new obstacles to resettlement) – a key issue in 2025 will be the immigration levels
- Family reunification – CCR will continue advocacy on One Year Window applications in 2025

Root causes were identified as a long-term concern.

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# International Engagement – CRCP

In June 2025, the CCR led a delegation to the UN Consultation on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP) in Geneva to bring refugee and civil society perspectives from Canada to discussions of durable third country solutions for refugees. Key **priorities** guided the delegations interventions and contributions in Geneva.



## Legal Affairs

As part of its advocacy work, the CCR engages in strategic litigation to further the rights of refugees and immigrants. This work is overseen by the CCR’s Legal Affairs Committee. In addition to CCR’s continued multi-year challenge to the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA), highlights of legal interventions this year included:

### Frank Dorsey and Ghassan Salah v. Attorney General of Canada

CCR intervened in *Frank Dorsey and Ghassan Salah v. Attorney General of Canada*, a case concerning whether a person denied a transfer to a minimum-security institution has a right to habeas corpus. The CCR argued that habeas corpus is critical at multiple junctures within the immigration and correctional legal systems, and that its broad and equitable access should be maintained for all, regardless of immigration status and race. The Supreme Court rendered a **decision** on November 21, 2025.

### Attorney General of Québec v. Bijou Cibuabua Kanyinda

CCR intervened in *Attorney General of Quebec v. Bijou Cibuabua Kanyinda*, a case concerning whether the children of refugee claimants should have equitable access to subsidized daycare. CCR assisted the court in understanding that Canada is obligated to provide non-discriminatory access to public education, as is outlined the Refugee Convention that Canada has signed onto. The Supreme Court rendered a **decision** on March 6, 2026.

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# Youth Network Program

2024-25 was a year of transition for the CCR Youth Network program. In addition to organization of youth-led workshops and events at the CCR working groups and Consultation, CCR secretariat and Core team members undertook evaluation, interviews and reflections on strategic directions for our youth program to ready for renewal and relaunch of the Core Team! CCR appreciates all the inputs and the work we accomplished this year!

## Youth Core Team

### Youth Network Coordinator

*Almustafa Abbas*

### Members

*Jannath Naveed*

*Yankish Chahar*

*Ana Zavalza*



## The Daniel Schickedanz Scholarship Award

This award supports young people of refugee and/or migrant backgrounds in their efforts to pursue higher education. It encourages youth engagement within their local communities. The award is facilitated through the collaborative efforts of the Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) and CCR and made possible by a generous donation from Daniel Schickedanz. Each year, 10 scholarships are awarded: five of them on an educational basis and the other five on a community-engagement basis. This fiscal year, we distributed 10 awards, which are selected by Youth Core Team members.

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# Francisco Rico-Martinez Award

Named after the late Francisco Rico-Martinez, former President of the CCR (1997-2001) and founder and Co-Director of the FCJ Refugee Centre, and as a way to honour his leadership over three decades with the CCR, the Francisco Rico-Martinez Access to Justice Award is given on an annual basis to an individual, groups of individuals, or an organization to support a project aligned with Francisco's core commitments.

This fiscal year, the award was given to **Vivimos Juntxs, Comemos Juntxs (VJCJ)**, a grassroots collective that aims to provide material and social support to undocumented communities, while simultaneously creating a migrant-led, migrant-decided space where our communities can imagine and work towards building a city where we have power over the services and resources we need to live a dignified life. The collective is former and current undocumented people, activists, allies, women and LGBTQIA2S+ people.

Their project, the **Community Defenders: Undocumented Leadership Program**, is a 4-month leadership program hosted every week for current and former undocumented people to learn and reflect on structural racism through conversation (not through formal workshops).

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# Our Team

## Staff

### Co-Executive Directors

- Lauren Lallemand (*Finance and Operations*)
- Gauri Sreenivasan (*Policy and Advocacy*)
- Tanja Maleska (*Communications and Development*)

### Immigration and Settlement Policy Director

- María José Espejo Rivas

### Inland Protection Policy and Advocacy Manager

- Rahul Balasundaram

### Senior Policy Advisor

- Janet Dench

### Member Services Manager

- Alice Alvarez-Pereyre

### Administrative Coordinator

- Audrey Pasinetti

### Events Coordinator

- Basel Dakak

### Communications Coordinator

- Line Sidonie Talla Mafotsing

## Executive Committee

### President

- Diana Gallego

### Vice President

- Jenny Jeanes

### Treasurer

- Abdullah Daoud

### Secretary

- Jenn McIntyre

### Counsellors

- Louisa Taylor
- Steve Reynolds
- Monica Abdelkader
- Alphonse Ndem Ahola
- Myriam Mekni

## Working Group Co-Chairs

### Immigration and Settlement (I&S)

- Edwin Silang
- Shelley Gilbert

### Inland Protection (IP)

- Basel Abou Hamrah
- Francesca Allodi-Ross

### Overseas Protection and Resettlement (OPR)

- Hugo Ducharme
- Syn Amanuel

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# Acknowledgment of Sponsors

We acknowledge with gratitude the support from the following organizations in 2024/25:

# Canada



## Fondation du Grand Montréal

**CUPE·SCFP** / Canadian Union of Public Employees  
Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique



Canadian  
Race Relations  
Foundation

Fondation  
canadienne des  
relations raciales

