



# Canadian Council for Refugees Conseil canadien pour les réfugiés

## Annual Report 2008-2009

### 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** - Elizabeth McWeeny, Thunder Bay

**Vice-President** - Roberto Jovel, Toronto

**Treasurer** - Yasmine Dossal, Toronto

**Secretary** - Lisa Wyndels, Toronto

**Counsellors** - Muuxi Adam, Winnipeg;

Mary Fiakpui, Edmonton; Oana

Grigorescu, Ottawa; Deborah Isaacs,

Vancouver; Anne-Marie Kabongo,

Montréal; Gloria Nafziger, Toronto;

Jeremias Tecu, Fredericton; Wanda

Yamamoto, Winnipeg.

### Working Group Chairs

**Immigration & Settlement** - Sherman Chan, Vancouver & Debbie Douglas, Toronto

**Inland Protection** - Rick Goldman,

Montréal & Debbie Hill-Corrigan, Toronto

**Overseas Protection & Sponsorship** -

Heather Macdonald, Vancouver & Mary Purkey, Sherbrooke

### Staff

**Executive Director** - Janet Dench

**Office Manager** - Guadalupe Macias

**Settlement Policy Director** - Meissoon Azzaria

**Communication and Networking**

**Coordinator** - Colleen French

**Policy and Program Assistant** - Varka Kalaydzhieva

**Office Assistant** - Rosamaria Castro / Jasmine Minassian

### From Elizabeth McWeeny, CCR President

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Canada's signing of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Since 1969, Canada has gained the enviable reputation of being a world leader in protecting refugees. The CCR has been active this past year in celebrating our country's successes, as well as drawing attention to the shortcomings that call for action. Regrettably, the year has also seen a dilution of Canada's commitment to refugee protection, in the context of rhetoric from politicians and the media that is creating a new wave of xenophobia against both refugees and immigrants.

40 years ago, Canada had no refugee determination system. Today, Canada recognizes in law and policies that all refugees, without discrimination, have the right to protection in Canada and are accorded basic rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Our system is seen as a model around the world, especially in the use of decision-making by an independent quasi-judicial tribunal, the Immigration and Refugee Board. Canada has also been a leader in recognizing protection needs based on gender and sexual orientation and has broadened the definition of those needing protection to cover those facing return to torture or a risk to life.

Today, our refugee protection system is under threat. Proposed legislative changes promise to undermine a fair refugee determination process, by doing away with strong first level decision-making by the Immigration and Refugee Board and giving only second-tier protections to some refugees, based on nationality. These proposals, coupled with new visa requirements and expanded Safe Third Country exclusions, represent a weakening of Canada's commitment to the Refugee Convention. The CCR is committed to working to achieve a refugee determination system with equal access for all, a strong first level decision by an independent body and an appeal process on the merits.

Sadly, Canada is still ineffective in reuniting families and CCR has continued to work hard on this issue. Family members, especially children, are left in precarious, unsafe conditions for years. Processing of applications is often intolerably slow, especially in some regions of the world, notably Africa. Moreover, demands for expensive DNA tests or exceptions for children who are not included under the law stretch processing times still further.

Canadian immigration policy has seen a recent shift to temporary migration, which marks a dramatic change in policy for which there has been little public debate. For a country built on immigration, large-scale temporary migration has significant social, political and human implications. The CCR and its members have been raising concerns over this trend, as well as standing up for the rights of temporary workers.



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Increasing rates of poverty among newcomers to Canada is a key concern for the CCR. The impacts of discrimination, homelessness, increasing difficulties in the job market, and lack of access to services have been keenly felt in 2009 and remain priorities.

On a positive note, more than half a million refugees have been resettled to Canada over the past 40 years. 200,000 of them have been resettled thanks to the direct support of Canadians through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. But Canada could and should do more. Since 2000, fewer than 11,000 refugees have on average been resettled to Canada each year, compared to an annual average of 18,000 in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the midst of these continuing challenges, the CCR remains committed to the rights and protection of refugees and the settlement of refugees and immigrants in Canada, through dialogue with government, increased public education, outreach to traditional and non-traditional partners in other sectors and a firm spirit of solidarity with refugees who rely on us.

## Highlights of Activities 2008 - 2009



Vicente and his family were featured in a CCR publication highlighting why refugees need fair treatment. Photo submitted.

> **Children:** Through workshops, resolutions, reports and dialogue with government, we have been focusing on the impacts of policies on children. The CCR has been urging Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency to make the best interests of children a primary consideration, as required by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CCR has highlighted numerous cases where children's interests are neglected, in the areas of family separation, detention and humanitarian and compassionate consideration.

> **Refugee determination system:** Plans to change the refugee determination system were announced by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration at the CCR's Fall 2008 Consultation. The CCR has been actively pressing for changes to preserve and build on the strengths of the current system. Unfortunately, despite repeated requests, the Minister declined to consult with the CCR. In the meantime, the CCR continued to support the implementation of the Refugee Appeal Division.



The CCR has launched a postcard campaign as part of efforts to have the Canadian government absorb the costs of transportation loans for refugees.

> **Refugee transportation loans campaign:** The CCR has shared widely what it has learned about the devastating impact on refugees of the heavy burden of the transportation loan (resettled refugees have to pay for their travel to Canada). The concern has been picked up in the media and by a range of organizations in different parts of the country.

> **Refugees in Guantanamo:** The CCR supported members who have submitted private sponsorship applications on behalf of refugees detained in Guantanamo, who are not accused of any crime but need a home where they can live in freedom and safety.

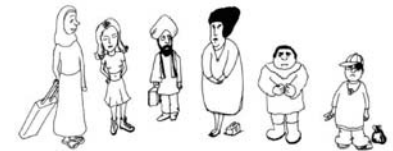
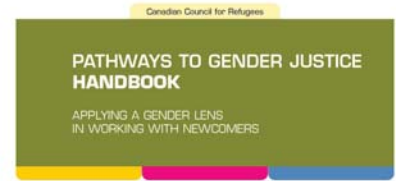


Djamel Ameziane is one of several refugees at Guantanamo sponsored for resettlement to Canada. Credit: Center for Constitutional Rights.

## Highlights of Activities 2008 - 2009

> **Anti-oppression policy:** In May 2009, after a long process of reflection, the CCR members adopted an Anti-Oppression Policy, committing the organization to anti-oppression in all areas of our work, externally and internally.

> **Pathways to Gender Justice Handbook:** Following up on previous work on bringing a gender-based approach to settlement services, the CCR



The Pathways to Gender Justice Handbook helps organizations to use a gender-based approach in their work with newcomers.



Lisa and Jordan were reunited with their mother in Canada this July after seven years, including 5 years of processing.

developed the Pathways to Gender Justice Handbook. This tool is a practical guide designed for organizations that serve refugees and immigrants.

> **Long delays at visa offices:** The CCR focused attention on the long processing times at some visa offices for privately sponsored refugees and dependants of refugees. Delays are particularly acute in Africa, especially at the Nairobi visa office. These concerns led to the development of a report, *Nairobi: Protection Delayed, Protection denied*.

> **Temporary workers:** The growing number of non-citizens admitted to Canada on temporary work visas continued to preoccupy the CCR. A pamphlet was produced to educate the public about the dramatic shift in Canada's policy – a shift that has not been publicly discussed.



The CCR has published a new pamphlet to raise awareness about the growing number of people on temporary work visas.

> **Palestinian refugees:** The CCR joined with NGOs in other countries in a campaign to seek resettlement for Palestinian refugees forced out of Iraq and stuck in unsafe camps in border zones. Gloria Nafziger represented the CCR on an international delegation to visit the camps.



Palestinian children playing at Al-Hol refugee camp in Syria. Gloria Nafziger represented the CCR on a fact-finding trip in November 2008. Credit: Gloria Nafziger.

> **Safe third country:** The CCR's efforts to challenge through the courts the designation of the US as a safe country for refugees suffered a very disappointing setback when the Supreme Court of Canada declined to hear an appeal of the case.

> **30th anniversary gala:** The celebration of the CCR's 30th anniversary concluded with an extremely successful gala dinner, held in Toronto in November 2008. The event highlighted the strong reputation that the CCR has won for itself through 30 years of tireless work in favour of refugee and immigrant rights.

## Report from Yasmine Dossal, CCR Treasurer

The CCR would like to thank all its donors, members, and supporters for their unflagging support. It has helped us continue our work, with conviction, in protecting the rights of refugees in Canada and around the world.

In order for the CCR's voice to continue to be a strong and respected one, we turn to our communities for support in meeting our financial needs.

The CCR does not receive any core funding from governments and hence relies on its friends, donors and supporters to provide financial assistance. Presently, CCR staff and board members are developing a plan to address the financial challenges that the organization faces. This plan will look at how CCR can expand its membership and donor base, how it can diversify its sources of funding, and obtain the necessary resources to cover operational costs relating to the work we do.

In order for this financial plan to succeed, we are reaching out to all of you who know the CCR and who support the CCR for the work we do.

Please come forward and assist by:

- > Encouraging your organization and others you work with to become CCR members.
- > Identifying organizations who would be happy to sponsor events like CCR consultations.
- > Making either one-time or periodic charitable donations (you will receive a receipt for tax purposes).
- > Participating at CCR consultations.
- > Volunteering time towards CCR activities, at any of the CCR's member organizations.

Your contributions, in any form, go a long way towards helping CCR achieve its goal and making Canada a welcoming place for refugees and newcomers.

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

## Audited Financial Report for Year Ended August 31, 2009

|  | 2009           | 2008           |
|--|----------------|----------------|
|  | \$             | \$             |
| <b>Revenues</b>                            |                |                |
| Grants                                     |                |                |
| Government                                 | 128,323        | 90,514         |
| Others                                     | 8,010          | 51,936         |
| Donations                                  | 162,852        | 122,926        |
| Events -fundraising                        | 32,357         | 600            |
| Conference registrations                   | 72,815         | 51,945         |
| Membership fees                            | 57,198         | 57,130         |
| Publications                               | 1,943          | 2,049          |
| Interest                                   | 3,618          | 4,331          |
|  | <u>467,116</u> | <u>381,431</u> |
| <b>Expenses</b>                            |                |                |
| Salaries                                   | 190,029        | 178,108        |
| Conference expenses                        | 91,345         | 52,897         |
| Executive committee                        | 13,918         | 11,788         |
| Working Group expenses                     | 28,079         | 14,016         |
| Networking and public education            | 50,968         | 47,430         |
| Administration expenses                    | 44,686         | 43,589         |
| Fundraising                                | 43,870         | 15,805         |
|  | <u>462,895</u> | <u>363,633</u> |
| <b>Excess of revenue over expenses</b>     | 4,221          | 17,798         |
| <b>Balance Sheet as at August 31, 2009</b> |                |                |
| <b>Assets</b>                              |                |                |
| Current Assets                             |                |                |
| Cash                                       | 13,701         | 16,055         |
| Investments maturing in the coming year    | 88,341         | 98,715         |
| Accounts receivable                        | 53,393         | 41,376         |
| Prepaid expenses                           | 3,222          | 1,687          |
|  | <u>158,657</u> | <u>157,833</u> |
| Investments                                | 40,000         | 40,000         |
|  | <u>198,657</u> | <u>197,833</u> |
| <b>Liabilities</b>                         |                |                |
| Current Liabilities                        |                |                |
| Accounts payable                           | 15,302         | 14,822         |
| Deferred contributions                     | 52,897         | 56,774         |
|  | <u>68,199</u>  | <u>71,596</u>  |
| <b>Net Assets</b>                          |                |                |
| Restricted to income stabilization fund    | 20,000         | 20,000         |
| Unrestricted                               | 110,458        | 106,237        |
|  | <u>130,458</u> | <u>126,237</u> |
|  | <u>198,657</u> | <u>197,833</u> |

The above is a summary. Copies of full audited statements, including notes, are available from the CCR office.

### CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

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