Annual Report



Land Acknowledgement

The Arab Community Centre of Toronto acknowledges that we are operating on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and that this territory is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

We also acknowledge all Treaty people including those who came here as settlers, as immigrants, either in this generation or generations past, and those who came here involuntarily particularly as a result of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery.





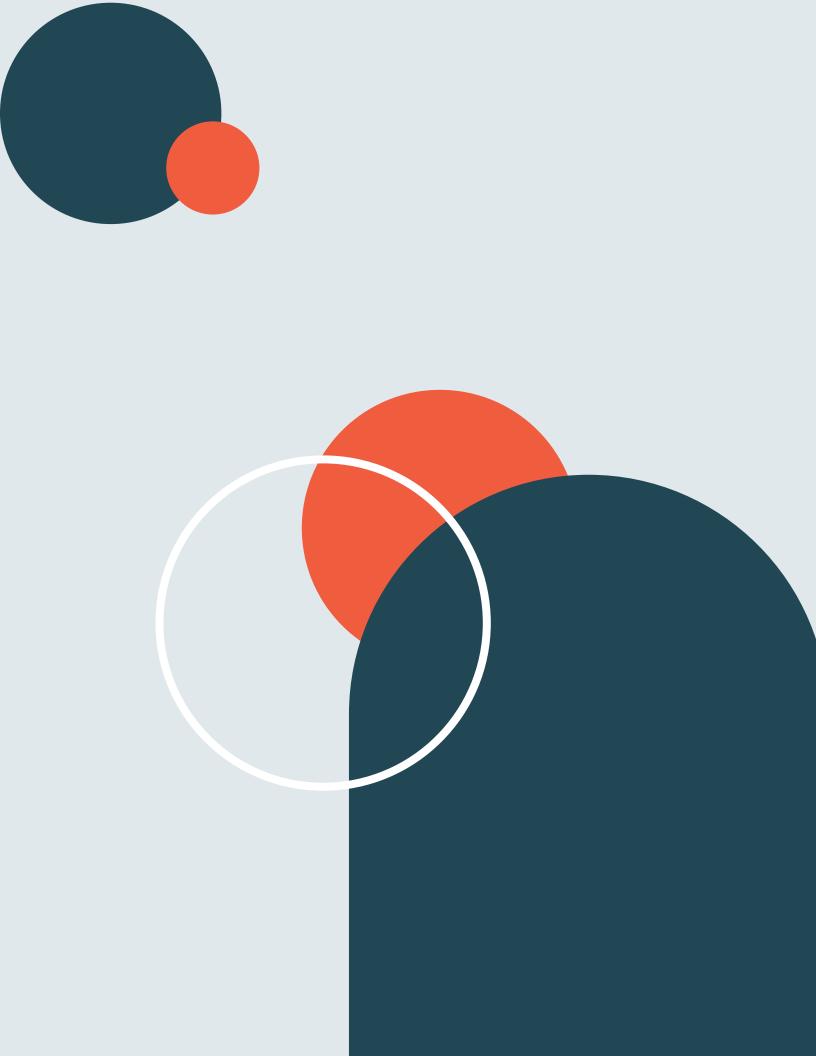


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Leadership Message

It is with great pleasure - and a profound sense of pride - that we present to you our Annual Impact Report for the year 2022-2023. As you read through the report, you'll notice that the past year marked a remarkable chapter in ACCT's journey, defined by collaboration, growth and innovation. Our achievements stand as a testament to our unwavering commitment to empowering our community to transform their lives for the better.

Throughout the past year, we have established strong partnerships to expand our reach and proactively address the evolving needs of our community. We have launched new programs that promote empowerment and extended our presence to new locations. Notably, we have invested in enhancing our staffing and technological capabilities, enabling us to seamlessly connect with our community in their preferred modes of engagement, whether in-person or virtually.

In May 2022, we proudly opened our doors at our new location on 295 the West Mall, providing a larger space that prioritizes privacy, security, and confidentiality for our staff and clients. Additionally, in October 2023, we celebrated the inauguration of our youth center on Norseman Street, a dedicated space for our youth activities.

Towards the end of the year, our community was deeply impacted by the devastating earthquake in Syria and Türkiye. Many of our clients experienced great distress and concern for their loved ones. Recognizing the emotional toll and the effects of yet another displacement, we came together as a community to provide support. We organized efforts to collect clothing and donations through the Red Cross and other international humanitarian organizations, while also creating a space within our organization for our clients to find solace, healing, and support.

Our journey over the past year has not been without challenges. Despite the gradual return to normalcy, integrating hybrid services proved demanding. Many clients preferred accessing services online for various reasons-balancing childcare responsibilities, attending to elderly family members, work commitments, or geographical distances. The demand for multi-channel service options became evident, prompting us to restructure our service delivery and equip our team with expertise in navigating diverse platforms to better support clients.

As we find ourselves at the intersection of innovation and necessity, we extend our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to our funders and community partners. Their unwavering support and resources have enabled us to support more families at a time when they need us the most. Rising inflation, housing and food costs, unemployment and a multitude of other challenges have led a greater number of individuals to our doorsteps where we've been able to assist them in accessing resources and meaningful opportunities.





The credit for our achievements goes to our exceptional team of staff and volunteers. Their hard work and dedication have paved the way for this growth. Together, with our community members and partners we have brought about positive change and accomplished great success. As we prepare to celebrate our 50th anniversary this year and honour our rich history, we know that the values that guided us in our journey of care for our clients, staff and community will serve us well in the decades to come. With your continued involvement and support, we are confident in our ability to continue making a significant impact on the communities we serve.

Fathi Abu Farah

Board President Tathi Abu Jarah **Dima Amad**

Executive Director

Dima Amad

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Fathi Abu-Farah

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Member

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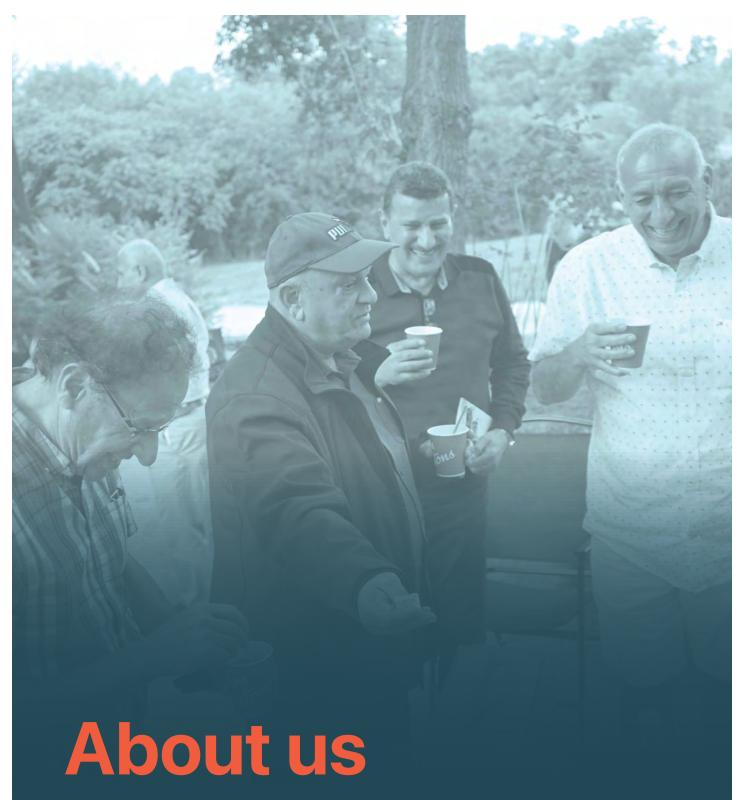
Member

Bilal Hamadah

Member

Hani Al-Dajane

Member



Established in 1973, the Arab Community Centre of Toronto (ACCT) is a non-political, non-religious, and non-profit organization that works with newcomers of all backgrounds across Toronto. In its early years, ACCT had set out to help Arab Canadians. Particularly in the past few years, the growing needs of vibrant communities for settlement and social services prompted ACCT to expand its services, programs, and outreach to accommodate anyone who comes in through our doors. As an advocate of self-sufficiency, ACCT works towards creating innovative programs and services that adapt to the ever changing needs of the communities we work with.

Values

Vision

To contribute to a welcoming, inclusive society that accesses the full potential of newcomers and residents to constantly enhance and strengthen Canada's multicultural fabric.

Mission

To enable individuals and families from diverse communities to change their lives for the better by providing a range of settlement and social services that include innovative programs for family support, mental well being, women empowerment, youth skilling, and employment.



Respect for privacy and confidentiality



Efficiency and effectiveness



Innovation



Diversity, inclusion and accessibility



Transparency and integrity



Quality and excellence

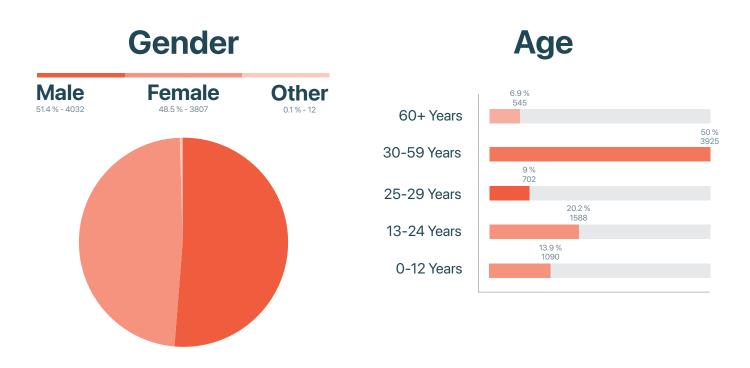


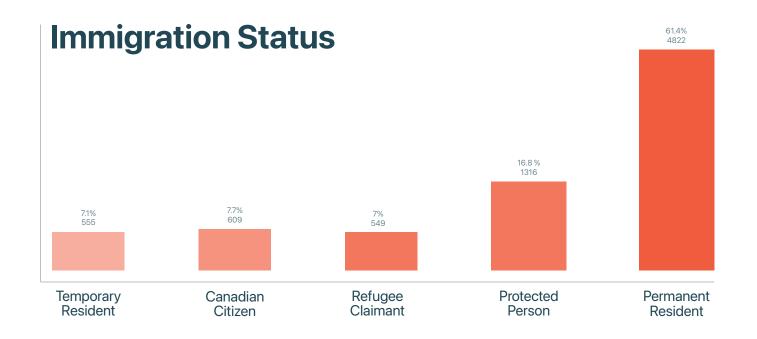
Volunteerism



Caring and compassion

ACCT Impact and Reach





Top 10 Countries of Origin



Top 10 languages









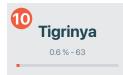












We provide information, referral, and support to newcomers to Canada from the moment they land until they become self-sufficient, productive, and engaged citizens.



Empowering Newcomers Through Settlement Services

ACCT successfully delivered settlement services to newcomers in 2022-2023 through a hybrid model comprising virtual, in-person, and telephone support. Our Settlement Counsellors diligently assessed clients' needs and devised customized settlement plans to aid their integration into Canadian society. We assisted clients with diverse requirements, including employment, housing, banking, accessing government benefits, mental health support, activities for youth and seniors, and resources for women facing domestic abuse.

Funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, our comprehensive settlement program offers culturally sensitive services to facilitate newcomers' integration into Canadian society. Our services fall within four main categories: Information and Orientation, Needs Assessment and Referrals, Employment, and Community Connections. We also extend additional support services such as translation and interpretation, transportation, and crisis counselling.

Beyond providing tailored one-on-one services, we hosted virtual workshops to address common newcomer needs and concerns. Our most sought-after services included employment assistance, guidance in accessing affordable housing, and financial support. At ACCT, we remain dedicated to offering helpful, equitable, and secure support to newcomers.





Citizenship Education

ACCT is committed to helping newcomers successfully integrate into Canadian society by promoting their understanding of Canadian history, culture, values and heritage. A key approach in achieving this goal is by delivering comprehensive classes to prepare for the Canadian Citizenship exam. In the past year, ACCT as delivered exceptional citizenship classes to ents.

e they can ask questions and expand edge about Canada. To enrich their curney, ACCT also offers interactive to assess their knowledge and to assess their knowledge and the actual exam with confidence. Our high success rate in exam passage has resulted in a passage of the actual exam passage has resulted in the actual exam pa









Strengthening English Proficiency

Our virtual English Conversation Circles have been a great success in helping newcomers improve their day-to-day English conversation skills. We will maintain these sessions weekly throughout 2023-2024. Additionally, we have integrated English conversation practice into other activities like cooking, trips and art workshops. Participants are encouraged to engage in consistent English communication while receiving well-structured lessons on grammar and vocabulary.







The ACCT Employment Services Career Cafe plays a vital role in helping newcomers enter the Canadian workforce. We provide personalized sessions, workshops, and support groups to help clients understand the needs and requirements of the job market.

Through our workshops, clients acquire the skills necessary to apply for positions in their chosen fields. Given the high unemployment rate in the city, securing employment has posed challenges, leading to increased popularity of our program in the past year. Our services have been utilized by both newcomers and individuals experiencing unemployment. Our workshops encompass a range of topics, including job search techniques, optimizing LinkedIn profiles, refining resumes, networking strategies, and crafting effective cover letters.









Digital Literacy

Our weekly virtual workshops on digital literacy offer newcomers and refugees essential digital skills training, establishing a welcoming and secure environment for learning. These workshops aim to enhance their digital literacy, thus expanding their access to information and opportunities, all while fostering self-confidence empowerment. The workshops we conduct encompass a range of topics, such as introductions to computers and the internet, fundamental computer skills like typing, file management, and internet browsing, as well as guidance on using email and social media, navigating government websites and online forms, ensuring online safety and privacy, and accessing settlement services via the internet

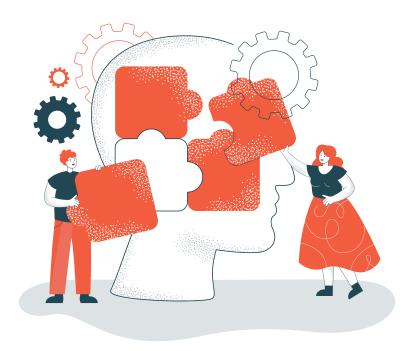




Wellness Hub

Our well-being services have expanded this year to address the growing challenges faced by our community. Our team deals with daily issues, including increased divorce rates, domestic violence, and child abuse. To address these challenges, we offer comprehensive one-on-one, in-person, and remote counseling services, along with referrals and workshops.

Led by well-being experts, our workshops have proven invaluable in promoting mental health and overall well-being. These sessions create a secure space for clients to seek guidance and answers to their questions and concerns. Through our Wellness Hub, we've conducted a range of workshops over the past year. Some highlighted workshop topics include 'Immigration and the Brain: Stress, Adaptation & Memories', 'Speech and Language Disorders', and 'How to Support Special Needs Students at School.' These sessions enabled our clients to delve deeper into these subjects and provided them with valuable tools for personal growth and support.









Provincial Settlement Program: Filling the Gaps

The Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP), funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development, aims to provide one-on-one settlement assistance to newcomers. This includes needs assessment, goal setting, service planning, help with applying for government resources, and information and referral services. The program is especially valuable for newcomers who have acquired citizenship and are no longer eligible for the Federally funded settlement program. We cater to refugee claimants, clients with temporary residence, students and work permits, as well as Canadian citizens.

In 2022-2023, we continued offering our services through a hybrid model, surpassing the number of clients served in previous years. Alongside one-on-one sessions conducted via Zoom or telephone, we held various workshops to help newcomers better understand life in Canada. These group sessions covered a range of topics, including housing, job search, parenting, and managing personal finances.

TawasolChat

TawasolChat is a series of workshops for newcomer clients seeking a supportive community where they can discuss the unique challenges they face on a daily basis. With a focus on providing a safe and secure space for open and honest communication, TawasolChat has successfully transitioned to a hybrid, virtual and in person model.

Through the power of technology, TawasolChat has been able to facilitate connections between group members, encouraging them to learn more about Canada and their place within it. In 2022-2023, TawasolChat offered a series of workshops designed to increase clients' knowledge of Canadian laws, rights, and responsibilities.

These workshops cover а range of settlement-related topics, including but not limited to: applying for Canadian citizenship, obtaining urgent travel documents, navigating the Ontario Electricity Support Program, and accessing Canada Child Benefits and subsidised housing. With a focus on practical and useful information, these workshops assist ACCT clients seek to better understand existing resources to assist them in settlement and integration.







Majlis

ACCT initiated weekly Mailis sessions for senior men in Winter 2022 after recognizing a growing concern regarding the mental health and well-being of senior men within the community. Many of these seniors are newcomers to Canada and face challenges in adapting to a new way of life. They might also grapple with feelings of loneliness and isolation due to a lack of social support. Mailis endeavors to reach out to senior men who experience isolation and encounter difficulties in integrating into Canadian society. Our in-person sessions conducted every week seek to establish a support network for these men through group sessions and trips to museums and The Toronto Art Gallery. By offering opportunities for social interaction, community engagement, and support, we contribute to helping seniors overcome feelings of isolation and enhance their mental health and well-being.







TAJDEED Project: New Horizons for Seniors

Funded by New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) Community-Based Projects, Tajdeed Project, meaning renewal, is a project that recognizes the importance of social connections and the exchange of experiences for newcomers in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, we facilitated social gatherings where clients could meet and make new friends, an essential step towards breaking the isolation that many newcomers experience. Additionally, we carried out two digital literacy workshops aimed at helping clients understand the basics of computer and cell phone usage, protecting their devices, and avoiding scam messages. ACCT also initiated a seniors' project, wherein volunteer youth could receive support and information from seniors about life in Canada while simultaneously providing digital literacy skills and assistance.

In total, ACCT organized eight field trips to museums, art galleries, and other main attractions in Canada, including a visit to Niagara Falls and Toronto Islands. These outings allowed clients to learn more about Canada's history, culture, and traditions, including Indigenous history. Moreover, ACCT conducted three sessions to increase clients' knowledge about Indigenous history. Two of these sessions were led by an Indigenous Chef who provided information on the stories behind Indigenous recipes and the cultural significance of traditional foods. The third session was a documentary screening that explored the legacy of residential schools, an important subject to understanding the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Through these initiatives, Tajdeed project demonstrated its commitment to fostering a welcoming and inclusive community for newcomers to Canada.











Windows to the Soul Building Women's Resilience

Freedom from violence is a fundamental right that everyone deserves.

Recognizing the profound impact of gender-based violence on those directly affected, along with their children, families, and communities.

Our close collaboration with Arab women facing struggles, suffering, or seeking to leave abusive relationships has exposed us to heartbreaking realities and opened our eyes to the harsh barriers these women confront. We've witnessed the multi-layered trauma they bear and the systemic gaps that perpetuate their retraumatization.

Through our initiative, Windows to the Soul, funded by Canadian Women's Foundation, we've tirelessly worked to raise awareness, prevent violence, and offer support that empowers a secure, informed, and cooperative community. In partnership with METRAC, our esteemed community ally, we organized a series of eight workshops that delved into navigating the legal system and comprehending Family Law in Ontario. These sessions were led by a family lawyer and were complemented by real-time Arabic interpretation.

Over the course of the year, we hosted a biweekly women's support group in conjunction with Family Service Toronto. This platform facilitated informative sessions tailored to the unique needs of Arab women, covering a wide array of topics and services.

In collaboration with women's advocates from our community, we facilitated a six-part series designed to bolster women's resilience, harness their talents, foster mutual support, and guide them towards leading balanced, healthy lives.



I reached out to the ACCT for support after I fled home and was living in a shelter.

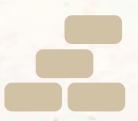
My case is complicated as our children are part of the conflict and all I want is to keep my family safe and together.

They provided me with essential information that helped me to better understand my rights and responsibilities and what to expect in the court. They offered me an alternative option to go to a safer women's shelter, they supported my meeting with the Victim Witness Program, and they invited me to join their women support groups.

I was lost and afraid but the support, the information, and the connection made me feel safe, supported, and not alone.

I'm currently working on mediation with my husband and hopefully, we will be reunion with our children soon.

- K.S - Arabic woman with a francophone background.

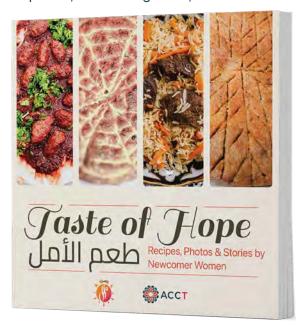




Amal: Cross-Cultural Integration for Women

Funded by IRCC, the Amal Project continued to achieve its goals and serve the newcomer community throughout the 2022/2023 period. This initiative is designed to empower and enable newcomer women to seamlessly integrate into Canadian society while fostering cross-cultural friendships. The project follows a structured approach with 3-month cohorts, featuring weekly informative sessions led by professional guest speakers. Topics covered encompass diverse subjects, including but not limited to the Canadian Banking, Medical, and Transportation Systems, Employment Strategies, Entrepreneurship, Positive Adjustment to a New Environment, Navigating Mental Health for Newcomers, English Proficiency, and Intercultural Awareness. The cohorts are thoughtfully designed with a hybrid format, incorporating virtual informational sessions as well as in-person meetups and outings. The in-person sessions are planned to opportunities for networking, experiences, and understanding of Canadian history, including Indigenous cultures and values.

The culmination of the past year's efforts resulted in the creation of the Taste of Hope Booklet. This publication showcases inspiring participant stories, heritage recipes, success narratives, event snapshots, acknowledgments, and more.





A few highlights of these engaging sessions are as follows:



Cuisine: The ACCT in Etobicoke hosts a session where participants have the opportunity to sample Indigenous cuisine while learning about its significance and the remarkable journey of

Indigenous Culture and

and the remarkable journey of First Nations Peoples. Indigenous Chef and Entrepreneur, Candace Esquimaux, is invited to provide

the session and cater the meals.



Community Cooking Project:

Held at St. Phillip's Lutheran Church in Etobicoke, this event brings women together to cook dishes from their respective heritages. It offers a day of bonding, networking, and experiencing the genuine Canadian hospitality that transcends differences and welcomes all.



Montgomery's Inn Tour and

Picnic: Participants gather at the Montgomery's Inn Museum for a guided tour that delves into its rich history. This is followed by a delightful picnic in the museum garden, fostering new friendships and lasting memories.

Our partnerships include notable organizations such as RBC/RBC Meetingplace, City of Toronto, Polycultural Immigrant Community Services, Syrian Canadian Foundation, ACCES Employment, Digital Mainstreet, Dixie Bloor Neighborhood Centre, and others. The Amal Project also collaborated with Renewed Computer Technologies (RCT), securing free laptops for over 20 women.







"My participation in the Amal project was an exceptional experience. As I was able to get to know new colleagues, especially after COVID, which was a major obstacle. Lectures and discussion sessions added a lot to our knowledge of the services that we desperately need and how to access them, including getting access to proper healthcare, building a good bank balance and credit score, starting the process of buying a house and the best ways to start a small business in Canada and how to register it and get it started. That is in addition to other miscellaneous topics that are of importance to newcomers. The Amal project provides learning aspects and social entertainment at the same time. The cooking and social networking sessions, in addition to visiting Canada's historical sites, enriched the project and increased its value. I hope this project reaches a lot of newcomers and provides them with the same benefit it provided me."

- Neima Omerredin



WES Gateway: Education Inclusion

The WES Gateway Program offers alternative pathways for evaluating educational qualifications for individuals who encounter difficulties in obtaining official records and documentation from seven specific countries. This program accepts alternative forms of evidence, such as attestations from educational institutions and letters of recommendation. Its primary objective is to create opportunities for individuals who may face obstacles in acquiring traditional official documentation. By providing a recognised evaluation report, the program enables these individuals to pursue further education, employment, or professional licensure in their destination country.

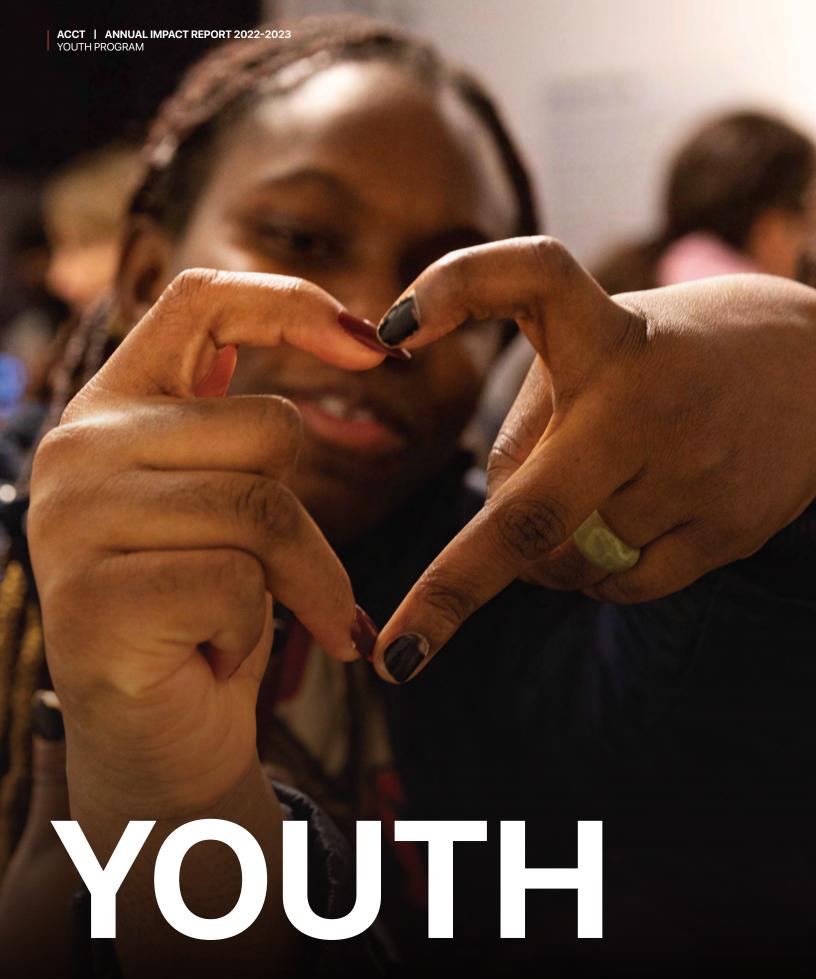
ACCT offers comprehensive support for individuals' applications and provides ongoing assistance and resources to clients in their pursuit of post-secondary education, professional licensing, and employment opportunities. Throughout the year, we have conducted three informative sessions covering a range of topics, including "What is Credential Evaluation?", "Navigating Postsecondary Pathways for Newcomers," and "Preparing an Efficient LinkedIn Profile."

In the fiscal year 2022-2023, we achieved significant milestones, with 182 newcomers receiving WES credential evaluation through our program. Currently, qualified clients from Ukraine, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Turkey, Syria, and Iraq can avail themselves of this program.



"WES has been a lifeline for me. As someone from Afghanistan, I faced numerous challenges while striving to pursue my education abroad. However, with the unwavering assistance of The Arab Community Centre (ACCT) and the exceptional evaluation and recognition services provided by WES, doors to universities I never dreamt of attending swung wide open. The guidance and support I received from ACCT and WES throughout the entire process were truly invaluable. Today, I find myself studying at a prestigious university, a reality I once believed was beyond my reach. I am profoundly grateful to ACCT and WES for genuinely transforming my life, and their impact will forever be etched in my heart."

- Ahmad



Youth Drop-in

In response to its prior success, the ACCT youth team relaunched the Youth Drop-in activity. This initiative saw remarkable achievements, with the youth team organizing engaging drop-in sessions that attracted an average participation of 13-15 individuals. These participants represented a diverse range of backgrounds, hailing from more than 11 countries including Nigeria, Syria, Palestine, Eritrea, Somalia, Canada, Ethiopia, Morocco, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Sudan.

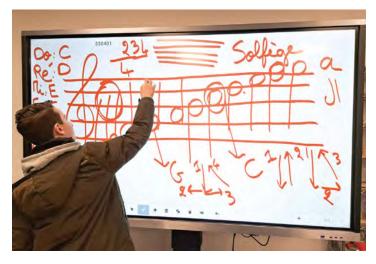
The Youth Drop-in is a safe space for newcomer and refugee youth from various countries and ethnicities to meet and make new connections and friendships. Facilitated by the youth team, the weekly sessions encompassed activities geared toward assisting participants in their settlement journey in Canada. The array of activities aimed to facilitate community integration and foster a deeper understanding of Canadian culture.

Among the range of activities offered were storytelling workshops, peer-to-peer advice circles, the "magical wall" where youths shared snapshots of their joyful or challenging moments throughout the week, interactive games highlighting Canadian cities and provinces, preparing for winter, and workshops addressing mental health awareness. These diverse activities contributed to creating a well-rounded, supportive environment for the youth to connect, learn, and thrive within their new Canadian context.



Guitar Lessons

As a response to the community connections needs assessment, the youth team organized both one-on-one guitar lessons in Etobicoke and group guitar lessons in Scarborough. These sessions provided comprehensive guitar instruction, guiding participants not only on how to play the guitar but also on making informed purchases, including identifying reputable guitar stores.



Media Arts for Youth

Since 2018, we have been carrying out our Media Art for Newcomer Youth (MANY) program to support newcomer youth to learn skills in photography and animation and exhibit their art. Through Media Art for Youth this year, our media arts youth programming focused on enabling youth to create projects that counter narratives of hate and racism. Media Art for Youth retained the same structure and taught the same skills as MANY, but eligibility was broadened to all youth residing in Toronto.

In Media Art for Youth, professional artists supported summer and winter cohorts of ten youth to learn introductory skills in photography or animation film. Youth attended group workshops and also had access to one-on-one mentorship with their instructor. For the duration of the program youth were provided with Macbooks and DSLR cameras to develop skills and create their projects.

All eligible youth who submitted project ideas related to countering hate and racism were interviewed by the project team. A youth committee of our media art graduates then selected each class based on articulated criteria.

Each cycle culminated in a public exhibit of the youths' work at Charles Street Video, our partner for the program, along with a reception to celebrate youths' achievements with their loved ones. At the exhibit reception youth spoke about their projects and received certificates of completion as well as professional fees for exhibiting their work.

The projects youth created were powerful and moving. One of the students created an animation film about the challenges of growing up gay in an African Christian household. In a project at the intersection of race, poverty, and food insecurity, another student told the story of the sacrifices his mother had to go through to put food on the table. Another student's poignant vignette on their trans identity explored coming to understand how their parents express love.



Media Art for Youth was made possible through the Anti Racism Anti Hate grant program of the government of Ontario.





March Break Activities

Our commitment to enriching the experiences of our youth was evident in the array of activities organized during March Break. These initiatives aimed to foster new connections and friendships among the youth. Activities spanned diverse fields, including visits to notable sites like the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Royal Ontario Museum, aimed at acquainting the youth with Canadian history and past civilizations. Additionally, trips to Skyzone and an Escape Room provided engaging experiences. The theme of the escape room activities revolved around Global Warming and Climate Change, offering valuable insights into taking individual actions to preserve the environment.



HalfTime: Black Youth Lead Positive Change

Halftime is a youth-centered and strength-based project that targets racialized and Black youth aged 15-24 from the Eastmall/ Westmall/ Capri area and Rexdale/Kingsway neighborhoods in Etobicoke. Halftime aims to promote positive change in the lives of youth by building resiliency against risk factors associated with violence.

Over the course of the year 2022-2023, Halftime successfully enhanced youth resilience and self-esteem, empowering them to make positive choices and increasing their access to education and employment opportunities. The project also prioritized promoting good family support and healthy relationships to foster a supportive environment for the youth.

Working in partnership with the Say Somaali and Hoyoo - grass root organizations - Halftime increased access to opportunities and positive role models for Black youth in the target areas, thereby strengthening community connections.

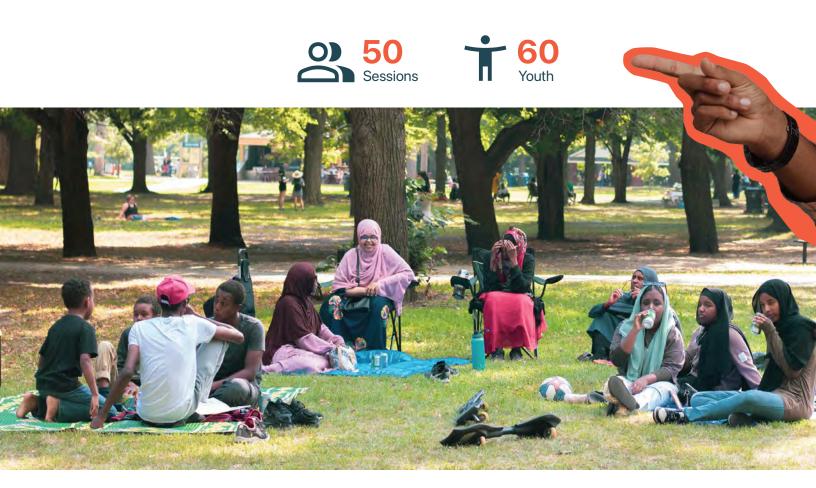






Aligned with Ontario's strategic frameworks to help youth succeed and reduce violence, Halftime demonstrated its commitment to achieving its objectives. The project directly impacted over 60 youth and provided them with one-on-one wrap-around support tailored to their unique needs and interests. Throughout the year, Halftime delivered various components, including life skills and employment readiness training. The program's culturally-relevant approach created a safe space for youth to develop positive cultural identities and vital life skills.

In the FY 2022-2023, approximately 40 youth have reported either returning to school or finding meaningful employment. We had organized over 50 tailored sessions for youth to equip them with the necessary employability and life skills. Youth also got an opportunity to participate in recreational and leadership-building activities. Many of the youth had the opportunity to experience activities like skiing, tubing, and attending Raptors games, which they might not have otherwise been able to participate in. Additionally, the project organized mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and family engagement activities, such as family and community picnics and parent nights. These initiatives provided valuable experiences and connections for the youth and their families.



TYJC Diversity, Transformation, & Engagement

The Toronto Youth Job Corps (TYJC) program continued to provide a transformative opportunity for young individuals aged 15 to 30 who face challenges in finding meaningful employment during the fiscal year 2022-2023. Funded by Service Canada and the City of Toronto, TYJC is designed to empower marginalised youth with essential employability and life skills. TYJC proudly served youth of all sexual orientations, racial backgrounds, and nationalities, fostering an environment that promotes multiculturalism and embraces diversity. The majority of our youth came from Arab countries, South Asian backgrounds, and various other nationalities.

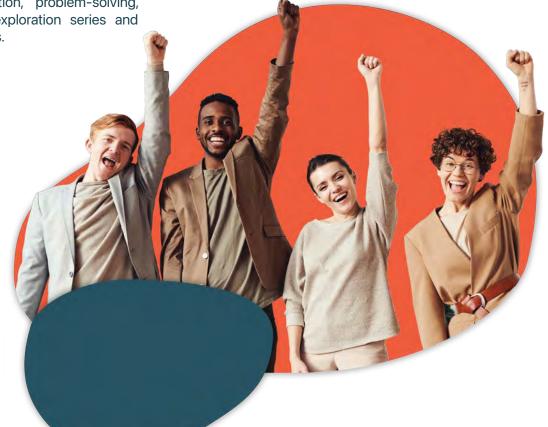
TYJC's 5-week intensive journey offers interactive and in-demand job readiness training to equip youth with practical tools needed to thrive in today's job market. Throughout the year, we conducted approximately 35 workshops per cohort totalling to over 200 workshops in a year while serving 84 youth across 7 cohorts. The program curriculum covered a wide range of topics, including effective communication, problem-solving, teamwork, adaptability, career exploration series and employment readiness workshops.

Community engagement remained a significant aspect of the TYJC program and it instilled a sense of responsibility, empathy, and social awareness, shaping our youth into well-rounded and engaged citizens. During FY 2022-2023, approximately 72 youth actively participated in various community projects, dedicating their time, talents, and efforts to make a positive impact on the community. These experiences allowed our youth to develop essential skills such as leadership, teamwork, project management. and communication. them with valuable real-world providing experience. Our youth worked on projects such as painting, wall art murals and created marketing and promotional campaigns for various not for profit agencies.











"My experience was very good with the TYJC program. I successfully completed the EST and community project, where I learned a lot of new things, particularly the soft skills that are required in employment. I then got a job placement in Mathstronauts Inc. in the IT System Web Developer position. It was too hard to get employment in the tech field but I got that placement due to the strong support of the TYJC program and its staff members. They helped me a lot. They shared lots of job placement opportunities with me. Based on my background and interest, they introduced me to Mathstronauts Inc for the IT system web developer position. I learned a lot of new things in that job placement and it helped me a lot to build my skills and get experience in the system web developer position. I was at the end of my job placement, when I got employed by SiteMaster in the Software Developer position. I got my job due to the skills and experience I obtained in the job placement. Due to the skills I had built, last year lots of employers reached out to me to interview me for the software developer and other similar positions. This is all due to the skills I have gained in my job placement.

I would say, specifically [I learned] the soft skills. I learned how to deal with my co-workers, I learned the workplace communication and other soft skills that are required for employment.

The TYJC program provides sufficient and meaningful support and help to youth. This is the only program where youth learn a lot of new things that are necessary for employment. Youth get placement and finally get employment due to the TYJC program. I would say this is the best program for youth. I am equipped with soft skills that are required for employment. I got a job placement and now I'm employed with a company. It's a nice company and I see myself in a better position in the next few years."

- Abdalbagi Mohamed - TYJC participant





"TYJC program is excellent. I learned about how to look for a job, write a resume, and prepare for an interview... Before joining the program I did not know about interview questions and how to prepare for a job interview, cover letter, workplace health, and safety

As a newcomer to Canada, this program was really helpful. I learned a lot about Canadian society/workplace culture and I got a chance to meet other youth during this program. The TYJC program also helps youth and newcomers because most of the time newcomers do not know about Canadian culture, rules, regulations, financing, and banking like credit scores and they might need some mental health support. The TYJC provides accurate information to the youth during the program by inviting guest speakers. After participating in this program I became much more confident I am going for an interview in the coming days and I feel comfortable that I can pass the interview,

The most important thing is now I know how to search for a job myself that is really important to me."

- Manisha - TYJC participant

TYJC also offered real-world work experience through partially and fully subsidised placements with reputable employers. We achieved 100% of our youth work placement target for the year. Moreover, over 40 youth secured full-time jobs after completing their placements. We actively expanded our employer partnership database by adding over 20 new connections. Employers have shown keen interest in offering placements to TYJC participants due to their professionalism and high-quality work ethics.

At TYJC, we understand the importance of providing a safe and inclusive space for our youth to socialise and learn. Our location offers a space for youth to interact, enjoy games such as table tennis, air hockey, board games, and Xbox during breaks and after program hours.



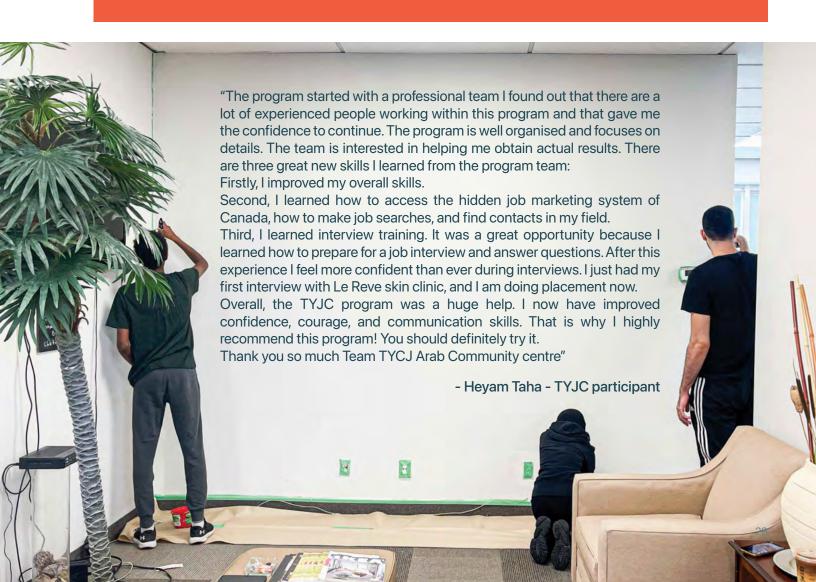
In 2022-2023 we remained dedicated to empowering and equipping our participants with essential skills for meaningful employment and personal growth. As we move forward, we will continue to refine and expand our initiatives, aiming to create even greater opportunities for the talented and promising young individuals we serve.



"The TYJC program and its staff helped me a lot in finding placement. I didn't have any connections here, I didn't know how to approach employers and didn't have any clear information about the Canadian job market. TYJC program and staff helped me to build my resume, provide me with necessary training and find a job placement I'm happy in my position and organisation and this is because of the TYJC program.

I didn't know how to alter my resume and cover letter according to the Canadian job market. I didn't know about the job search strategies and Canadian job market. I didn't know about the importance of networking, LinkedIn and workplace culture in Canada. I learned all these in the TYJC program. Thanks to TYJC and all staff members. I see myself in a far better position after attending the program. I'm now confident in searching and finding a job, building my network and familiar with the work place environment and communication."

- Nawid Ahmad Mohammadi - TYJC participant



Save Food, Save Lives

With funding from the City of Toronto, ACCT led a climate action project named "Save Food, Save Lives" in partnership with the South Etobicoke Cluster community network. This initiative aimed to reduce food waste and its carbon footprint by tapping into traditional food-handling practices.





All the insights from the workshops came together in a cookbook, shared widely with the public and partners. This project engaged over 220 individuals from local communities, offering tools for eco-conscious living and strengthening community connections. We collaborated with S E Cluster agencies, St. Margaret Church, St. Phillips' Lutheran Church, Foodshare, and various partners, experts, and chefs who guided educational and cooking sessions.



Cook Book

Sustainable and Cultural Food Recipes

JOSOOR: Bridging Digital Inclusion

Josoor, an IRCC-funded project, aims to enhance settlement outcomes for refugee women by utilizing tailored technologies that cater to their specific information and settlement needs and preferred digital communication styles. It is implemented in partnership with CAI and York University Centre for Refugee Studies and guided by an advisory committee with representation from the academic, settlement, and technology sectors, as well as refugee women.





The need for Josoor became apparent during the pandemic when the closure of in-person programs and services led to significant challenges for refugee women in accessing the support they needed for settlement and integration. Faced with language and literacy barriers, lack of digital access and skills, as well as other obstacles, refugee women found themselves disconnected from essential services and support at a time when their needs were greatest. Hence, Josoor was introduced with a straightforward hypothesis: empowering refugee women with access to devices, internet connectivity, and technological proficiency increases their chances of remotely accessing essential services, ultimately leading to improved settlement outcomes.







To test the hypothesis, in 2022-2023, Josoor conducted research activities aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities surrounding remote services from the perspective of refugee women. The successfully recruited 600 participants from Arab and Sub-Saharan African backgrounds and obtained valuable insights through surveys, focus groups, and informant interviews. The research results not only identified barriers to accessing and delivering remote services but also proposed a prototype for piloting and testing. This prototype represents a new approach to service delivery and will be evaluated during the upcoming fiscal year to determine its effectiveness in reducing barriers and meeting the specific needs and preferences of newcomer and refugee women.

Another achievement during the past year was the development and delivery of a digital training curriculum by our partners Humber College and TechServe TO. The curriculum was provided to a randomly assigned test group of 23 refugee women. Additionally, two more groups of 23 women were recruited to participate in the testing period in the next fiscal year. Careful selection of participants based on criteria such as age, digital literacy, education, and language level ensured a fair comparison between the three groups: the Test Group, the Partial Intervention Group, and the Control Group.

Looking ahead, the next steps for the Josoor project involve testing and evaluating the new approach over a 9-month period. From June 1, 2023, to March 1, 2024, the three groups will be monitored and assessed through regular surveys and key informant interviews. This evaluation process will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the new approach by comparing the experiences of newcomer and refugee women in accessing settlement services across the three groups.



UNVEILING OUR NEW HOME

In January 2023, we hosted an open house to celebrate the relocation of our head office to 295 The West Mall in Etobicoke. Although the move was just down the street, the new office space proved to be instrumental in accommodating our growing team and facilitating activities for our community. The open house provided an opportunity to reconnect with like-minded agencies, funders, and partners, bridging the gap that the COVID-19 pandemic had enforced. Guests had the chance to meet our staff and get a first-hand look at the quality services we provide to our community. They enjoyed an afternoon of networking, delicious food and a tour of our new facility. Notable guests included Margarita Boody and Eva Hellreich from IRCC, Kim Sit from MCCSS, Vanessa Wallace from Toronto Foundation, and the newly elected City Councillor, Amber Morley. We extend a special acknowledgement to IRCC for their invaluable support, which played a pivotal role in making this move possible.





Building Social Capital with the Toronto Foundation

We are excited to announce that we have been chosen as a recipient of the 2022 TF Social Capital Grant from the Toronto Foundation. This prestigious grant recognizes our efforts to enhance social capital and foster unity among individuals. We were privileged to be part of a unique granting process where funding allocation was collectively determined by us and four other community agencies. This experience provided valuable insights into each other's work and identified opportunities for collaboration, enabling us to leverage our strengths and support one another. Through this collaborative journey, we have reaffirmed our commitment to building a stronger and more interconnected Toronto.



Improving Access to Justice with York University

The gaps in Canada's legal systems disproportionately impact people experiencing systemic oppression, intersectional inequities, or with limited financial means. Very few people have the resources to resolve them, and for low-income groups, one legal problem often leads to other legal, social, economic, or health problems. This reality, compounded by a lack of understanding and empathy in our society, has created what many are calling an "access to justice crisis.

Pro Bono Students Canada was founded in 1996 at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, and with Chapters at 22 law schools throughout Canada to address this crisis by training and mentoring law student volunteers to work with non-profit and community organizations serving those most in need.



Healing Through Art with Access Alliance

Last year, we partnered with Access Alliance to implement Hubs of Expressive Arts for Life – HEAL, a community-based research project that is focused on vulnerable newcomer populations who are survivors of domestic violence in the City of Toronto. The project aims at developing expressive arts interventions and identifying promising or best practices to address the trauma-informed health impacts of family violence and to improve participants' physical and mental wellbeing. Working with Access Alliance team, ACCT's peer researcher received training in research ethics, gender-based violence response, and art-based evaluation. The training included understanding the HEAL project, the role of the peer researcher, data collection processes. arts-based evaluation activities, working with vulnerable populations, and art therapy sessions. From March to April 2023, outreach activities were conducted to recruit participants for the HEAL project, including contacting women from a previous GBV research project, client referrals, and partner organizations. Pre-screening interviews were then conducted to assess participants' eligibility and safety. The progress of the HEAL project will be included in the next annual report.



Making Sense of Pain with Pain BC

In the pursuit of improving access to care and supporting marginalised individuals living with chronic pain, we embarked on a meaningful partnership with Pain BC in 2022-2023. Together, we successfully delivered the transformative "Making Sense of Pain (MSOP)" program. Following comprehensive training from Pain BC, one of our skilled ACCT facilitators led a series of 10 weekly sessions. These sessions provided participants with invaluable insights into understanding pain, identifying factors that may exacerbate it, and equipping them with practical strategies to effectively manage pain in their daily lives. Our commitment to enhancing the quality of life and well-being of those we serve was further solidified through this collaboration, and we look forward to continuing such impactful initiatives in the future.

Shock-Proofing Communities:The Impact of COVID-19 on GBV in the GTA

In 2022, the Canadian Women's Foundation funded a study by the Arab Community Centre of Toronto (ACCT) to assess the effects of COVID-19 on the GBV service sector and GBV survivors in the GTA. The study aimed to:



Evaluate how COVID-19 impacted GBV service organizations.



Understand the challenges faced by survivors accessing GBV services during the pandemic.



Suggest recommendations for addressing systemic barriers and survivor needs in emergencies.

Methodology: The study employed a mixed-methods approach, including online surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Participants included 11 service providers and 51 survivors from diverse backgrounds in the GTA. Data collection spanned from mid-August to November 2022, with interviews and surveys conducted in both English and Arabic.

Key Findings:

- Lockdown measures, while necessary, trapped some survivors with their abusers, exacerbating tensions.
- GBV service providers faced immense pressures during the pandemic, with emergency funding providing temporary relief.
- Low-income, racialized women encountered barriers like social isolation, financial constraints, and mistrust of the legal system.
- Virtual service delivery was effective, offering flexibility for survivors.
- Immigrant and undocumented survivors faced unique vulnerabilities due to their precarious status.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our Consultant/Researcher Dalal Abdul-Razzaq for her valuable insight and contribution to the research project.

"I have participated in many research projects as a participant either filling out surveys or participating in focus group discussions as I believe sharing my story would help others in need. However, I have never felt this much comfortable in a focus group discussion. The facilitators gave each one of us enough time to talk, posed the questions in a simple, straightforward way, answered our questions patiently, and provided support resources at the end. I felt connected to them and appreciated the amount of kindness and care they shared for us"

- Focus Group Participant

Community Connections

Community Connections has undertaken a diverse range of initiatives in the past year to engage newcomers, women, youth, and seniors within their respective communities. These activities aimed to empower individuals, foster community participation, boost confidence, and combat social isolation. In light of economic shifts, marked by a declining unemployment rate but rising inflation, 2022-2023 saw increased poverty and vulnerability across the Greater Toronto Area. Consequently, our focus remained on ensuring stability in crucial areas such as housing, food, mental health, and employment, particularly for vulnerable groups like seniors, large families, and single-parent households.



We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Al-Huda Institute Canada for their thoughtful and generous contributions during the Ramadan food baskets 2023 drive. This initiative provided 180 food baskets and 254 toys to newcomers, significantly alleviating food scarcity concerns during the holy month. Additionally, the ACCT-Al-Huda partnership distributed 150 winter jackets and accessories to Ukrainian and Afghani newcomers in 2022-2023, delivering clothing directly to those in hotels and shelters across the Greater Toronto Area.







Over the years, the Tzu Chi Foundation has been a steadfast supporter of our community. Through the ACCT / Tzu Chi Back to School initiative, we distributed colorful backpacks, school supplies, and gift cards for school shoes to 70 ACCT students and their families. These educational materials were also provided to our clients in Etobicoke and Scarborough, thanks to the dedication of volunteers, staff, and the Tzu Chi Foundation.





ACCT played a pivotal role as a community partner in Vaccine Engagement Teams (VET) initiatives. We not only provided resources to boost vaccination confidence but also amplified public health messages through door-to-door campaigns in the communities we serve. Our mission was clear: create supportive relationships for newcomers within the broader community, fostering their full integration. Collaborating with MABELLEarts, a community arts organization, we conducted workshops that aligned with this mission. These workshops enabled newcomers to build social connections and develop new skills, utilizing art as a means of self-expression.



Through various series of art workshops, we helped newcomers and refugees forge deeper connections with their communities, emphasizing the role of art in strengthening relationships. Over the summer, fall, and winter, under MABELLEarts' guidance, participants engaged in 'Watermarks,' 'Ceramic Workshops,' 'Cooking Chorus,' and 'March Break Camp.' These sessions encompassed activities such as drawing, cooking, and exploring artistic disciplines inspired by their homelands' traditions.



In July and August 2022, 18 ACCT women's circle clients participated in our summer workshop, 'Watermarks.' This program allowed participants to develop watercolor skills, share stories, and create original artwork. These sessions not only built community engagement and language skills through art but also increased newcomers' sense of belonging and confidence.

Our fall project introduced participants to ceramics, fostering artistic expression and creating functional pieces for use and display. We also organized cooking sessions, reconnecting women with traditional meals from their homelands and providing a sense of belonging and cultural connection.



During March Break, ACCT hosted a drop-in program for young children, led by Iranian puppet teacher Afsaneh Zamani. Activities included puppet projects, music, painting, and textile displays. ACCT's dedication to enhancing the lives of newcomers continued through these engaging programs.

ACCT proudly partnered with St. Philip's Lutheran Church in Etobicoke for the Neighborhood Table program, promoting food security and community connections. Families and single women-headed households received fresh food boxes from the Burnhamthorpe Collegiate and St. Philip's farmers market, accompanied by theme-based recipe guides and cooking activities.





To bridge cultural gaps and promote inclusivity, ACCT's Community Connections delved into the world of music and art. As normal operations returned to the province, our clients had the privilege of experiencing live performances by The Canadian Arabic Orchestra and the National Ballet of Canada. These events provided opportunities for over 450 clients to connect with their homeland's music and cultural heritage.



Our Annual Picnic aimed to celebrate diversity and promote community engagement. It brought individuals and families together, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity. Activities included sports, fitness, cheer and dance, face painting, and kids' arts and crafts. Generous contributions from Adonis, BMO, lifeplan investments, Re/Max, and Edmond Ishag resulted in valuable prizes for participants.







ACCT's Health Fair, held in partnership with the West Toronto Ontario Health Team, LAMP, and the City of Toronto, welcomed guests of all ages. Sponsored by the Ontario Health Team (OHT), the fair covered topics such as diabetes management, mental health, cancer care, and stress management. Youth Dabke performances, health workshops, storytelling, and yoga were among the highlights.

Collaborating with the Taste of the Middle East Foundation, we celebrated Middle Eastern cultures through music, art, dance, and culture. This partnership aimed to enhance the sense of belonging among Middle Eastern communities in Canada, engaging them positively with Arabic Canadian culture.



Toronto Newcomer Day 2022, in partnership with the City of Toronto, helped newcomers understand the city and access essential services. ACCT provided information about its programs and services at the event, which also featured a formal stage program and a citizenship ceremony.



Through our Community Connections Programs, we offered complimentary or discounted tickets to the province's most visited museums. The Access Pass allowed new Canadians to explore Toronto's museums, fostering an appreciation for Canadian heritage and unity as a nation.

In recognition of the dedication and commitment of our staff and volunteers, ACCT organized a Volunteer Appreciation / VET Ceremony and a Christmas luncheon. These events not only celebrated the team's achievements but also strengthened bonds within the organization



Our success and achievements owe much to ACCT's teamwork and long-standing partnerships with benevolent organizations, food banks, city services, and social service organizations. These partnerships have enabled us to provide clients with a comprehensive service experience, fulfilling our goal of supporting individuals and families facing various hardships.

We look forward to continuing our mission of making a positive impact on the lives of those we serve and fostering a stronger, more inclusive community in the years ahead. Thank you for your ongoing support.



Swift Response to Emerging Needs: Supporting Ukrainian and Afghani Refugees

Canada has always been known for its hospitality towards refugees and immigrants. In 2022, Canada welcomed Ukrainians who were fleeing the war in their homeland. To help these individuals transition smoothly into their new lives, ACCT provides comprehensive settlement services.

One of the key members of our team is a Ukrainian counsellor who was hired with IRCC funding in the fall of 2022. Her expertise and cultural knowledge help newcomers understand the nuances of Canadian society, customs, and norms. This, in turn, helps them to adapt to their new surroundings more comfortably.



At ACCT, we believe that integration workshops are an essential component of our settlement services. Through these workshops, newcomers get the opportunity to connect with others in a welcoming environment. They can learn about Canadian culture and customs, employment, banking and housing which is crucial for their successful integration into society. The workshops also provide them with a platform to share their experiences and challenges with others who understand their struggles.



In the summer of 2021, the Canadian government opened its borders to Afghan refugees. To assist with their settlement needs, we hired 2 Afghani counsellors to assist with the influx of Afghan clients. These newcomers face trauma and many challenges as they arrive in Canada, having left their families and belongings behind under Taliban rule.

With funding from United Way Greater Toronto, we carried out the Housing Orientation Project (HOP). Through this initiative, we were able to distribute gift cards to 85 Afghan newcomer families, which has proven to be a crucial and much-needed resource for them. These gift cards have provided essential supplies, such as groceries, Presto cards, and clothing, to these families who are in dire need of assistance.

We also partnered with Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, and Afghan Women Organisations to offer weekly workshops on settlement needs such as housing, banking, and employment. These hybrid sessions were conducted in Pashtu and Dari, and saw wide participation from Afghani newcomers residing at the hotels.

To reduce the isolation of Afghan women and connect them with others, ACCT developed a weekly workshop series called "Tea with Sisters." Topics covered included parenting, child-minding, riding the TTC, and finding neighbourhood grocery stores. These workshops started virtually and later moved to in-person meetings at parks, in our offices and neighbourhood Tim Hortons.

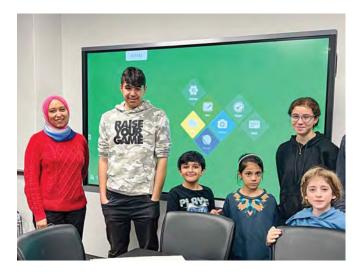
We have also included Afghani Youth and Children in our activities providing back to school backpacks and school supplies, winter clothing, field trips to Toronto Zoo and Pizza nights at our Youth Drop In at ACCT's Scarborough office.



Hand-in-Hand Project

Funded by TDSB, ACCT tutoring program strives to create a secure and encouraging space for K-12 students to regain and enhance their learning capabilities during the academic year. We have customised our tutoring services to include individual and small group sessions, focusing on essential skills such as maths and literature. Our priority is to support students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and at risk (newcomers and families in need) by providing them with a solid foundation in language, culture, and community norms.

The after-school tutoring program has had a remarkable impact, particularly in assisting students who are new to the country and still struggling with the English language. The tutors have focused on grammar, vocabulary, extensive reading, and writing and have significantly improved the students' English skills. As a result, the students have excelled not only in English but also in other subjects such as maths, science, geography, and history. The program has also positively affected the students' grades, with many of them achieving significant improvements and progressing to higher levels in their classes. Additionally, the program has provided test preparation assistance, which has been particularly beneficial for students still grappling with the language.







87 Sessions



"Frankly, the children benefited greatly from the program. Coordination and teachers were highly efficient. We hope that TDSB will extend the project due to its great and positive impact on the student's achievement and progress. We thank you for your efforts during the past period, and may God reward you well'.

- Mohammed Jadallah (Father of four children who participated from grade 4 to grade 9)

Canada Summer Jobs

We are delighted to have been part of the Canada Summer Jobs program, which has helped young Canadians develop essential skills and gain invaluable work experience. As an agency, we were privileged to have worked with four remarkable CSJ students, who made an enormous contribution to our mission and goals. We want to express our appreciation to Youssef Nabulsi, Miriam Ismail, Oyedoyinsola (Sola) Bankole, and Zamarin Sarwari for their dedication and remarkable work.

Youssef's analytical skills and meticulous attention to detail were instrumental in the success of our research projects. Miriam's passion for storytelling and media management skills brought our campaigns to life. Sola's work as a Youth Worker made a lasting impact on the lives of those we serve. Zamarin's resourcefulness and precise organizational skills streamlined our grant research and processes.

We are proud to have been part of their journey and inspired by their dedication, professionalism, and enthusiasm. Their ability to thrive within a fast-paced environment is an inspiration to us all. We wish them all the best in their future endeavors, confident that they will continue to make a positive impact on the lives of others. Thank you for the tremendous impact you have made on our agency and the lives of those we serve.



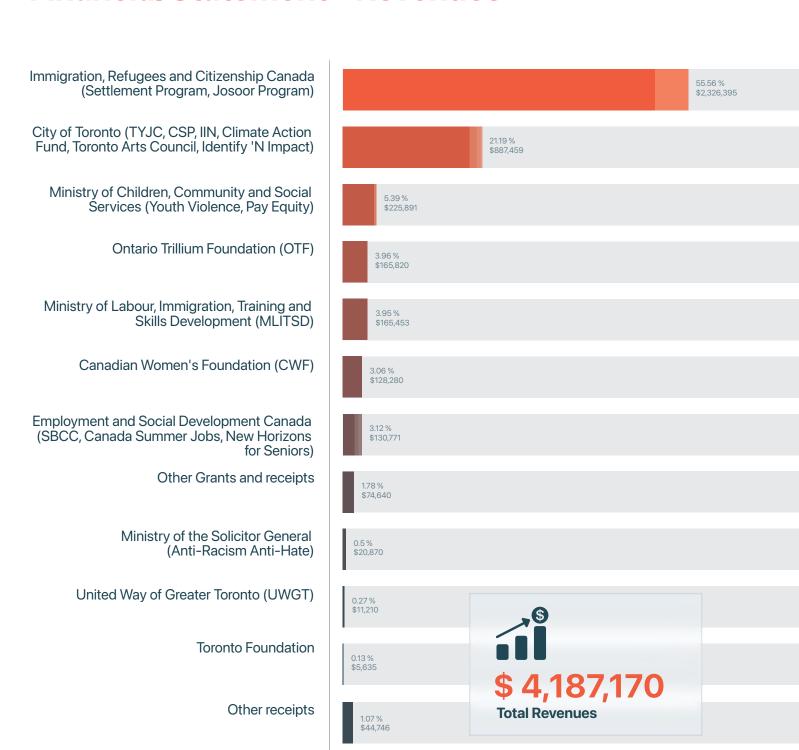
Volunteers

ACCT is blessed with an incredible group of volunteers who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to support us and our clients. We cannot adequately express our gratitude for their unwavering dedication and selflessness throughout the 2022-2023.

These volunteers have contributed in various ways, including assisting with our activities, providing interpretation and translation services for our newcomer clients, and even accompanying them to medical appointments when necessary. Their diverse backgrounds and skill sets have been invaluable in helping us provide the best possible services to our clients.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our volunteers for your incredible contributions and unwavering support. Your generosity and kindness have made a profound difference in the lives of our clients, and we are honoured to work alongside you.

Financial Statement - Revenues



Financial Statement - Expenses

Salaries and wages

71.72 % - \$2.965.432

Rent

6.50 % - \$268,702

Workshops and conferences

5.94 % - \$245,739

Professional fees

2.53 % - \$104,506

Contractual services

4.74 % - \$195,939

Amortization

1.91 % - \$79,153

IT support expenses

1.55 % - \$64,064

Repairs and maintenance

1.36 % - \$ 56,042

HST expense

0.66 % - \$27,142

Advertising and promotion

0.63 % - \$25,888

Office supplies

0.53 % - \$21,754

Telephone

0.56 % - \$23,267

Client transportation

0.52 % - \$21,338

Provision for facilities improvement

0.48 % - \$20,000

Insurance

0.16 % - \$6,613

Travel and parking

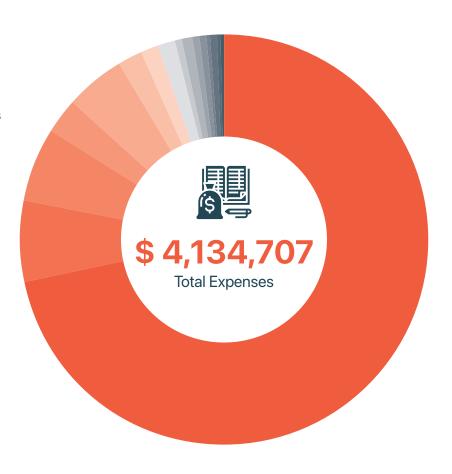
0.13 % - \$5,406

Other expenses

0.05 % - \$2,124

Bank charges and interest

0.04 % - \$1,598



Excess of revenues over expenses

\$ 52,463

*Based on Audited Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2022-2023

Partnerships & Collaborations

SE Coordination Cluster

SE ABR Non-Black Affinity Group

























































Our Funders



Funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Financé par Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Funded by the Government of Canada

Financé par le Gouvernement du Canada











Employment and Social Development Canada

















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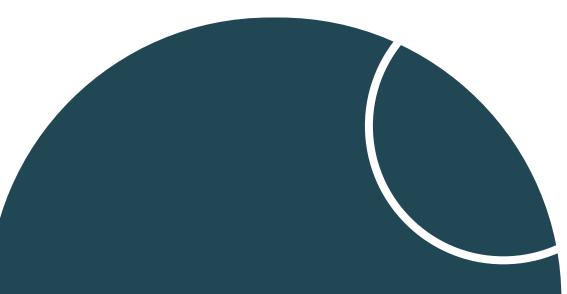
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