

ANNUAL REPORT

2025
2024



LE CENTRE DE RÉFUGIÉS
THE REFUGEE CENTRE

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A look behind our work

Message from the Director

Dear friends, partners, and supporters,

This past year has reminded us just how powerful collective action can be when it is rooted in solidarity rather than charity. Every service we offered, every legal file opened, every family housed, and every newcomer welcomed was made possible because you chose to stand with refugees in Montreal and across Canada.

With your support, The Refugee Centre has continued to grow into a true hub for integration and advocacy. Our team has expanded essential services across legal assistance, housing support, health and wellness, employment and education, while strengthening our outreach to the most marginalized refugee communities. At a time when housing precarity, long processing delays, and harmful narratives are putting even more pressure on newcomers, your commitment has allowed us not only to respond to immediate needs, but to build longer term, systemic solutions.

To our funders and institutional partners, thank you for trusting our vision and for investing in models that challenge the status quo. Your flexibility and long-term commitment have allowed us to innovate, test new approaches, and scale what works in a way that remains grounded in the lived realities of the people we serve. To our members, community partners, and volunteers, thank you for showing up every day with creativity, courage, and care. You are the backbone of this work.

We know that the road ahead will not be easy. The pressures on refugees and newcomers are growing, not shrinking. But we also know that we are not facing these challenges alone. Because of you, The Refugee Centre is better equipped to protect rights, open doors, and help newcomers not only survive, but build stable and dignified lives.

On behalf of our entire team and the thousands of people we serve each year, thank you for your continued trust and solidarity.

With gratitude,

Abdulla Daoud
Executive Director



Who We are

The Refugee Centre is a non-profit organization based in Tiohtià:ke/Montréal, founded in 2015. What began as a grassroots initiative has grown into a leading frontline organization for refugees and refugee claimants. Our work is shaped by on-the-ground realities and responds to legal, social, economic, academic, housing, and health needs to ensure that no one is left behind.

Grounded in lived experience and built on adaptability, we confront challenges directly and avoid siloed approaches. Instead, we provide comprehensive, wraparound support that recognizes the interconnected nature of settlement, ensuring that individuals and families never have to navigate this journey alone.

Mission

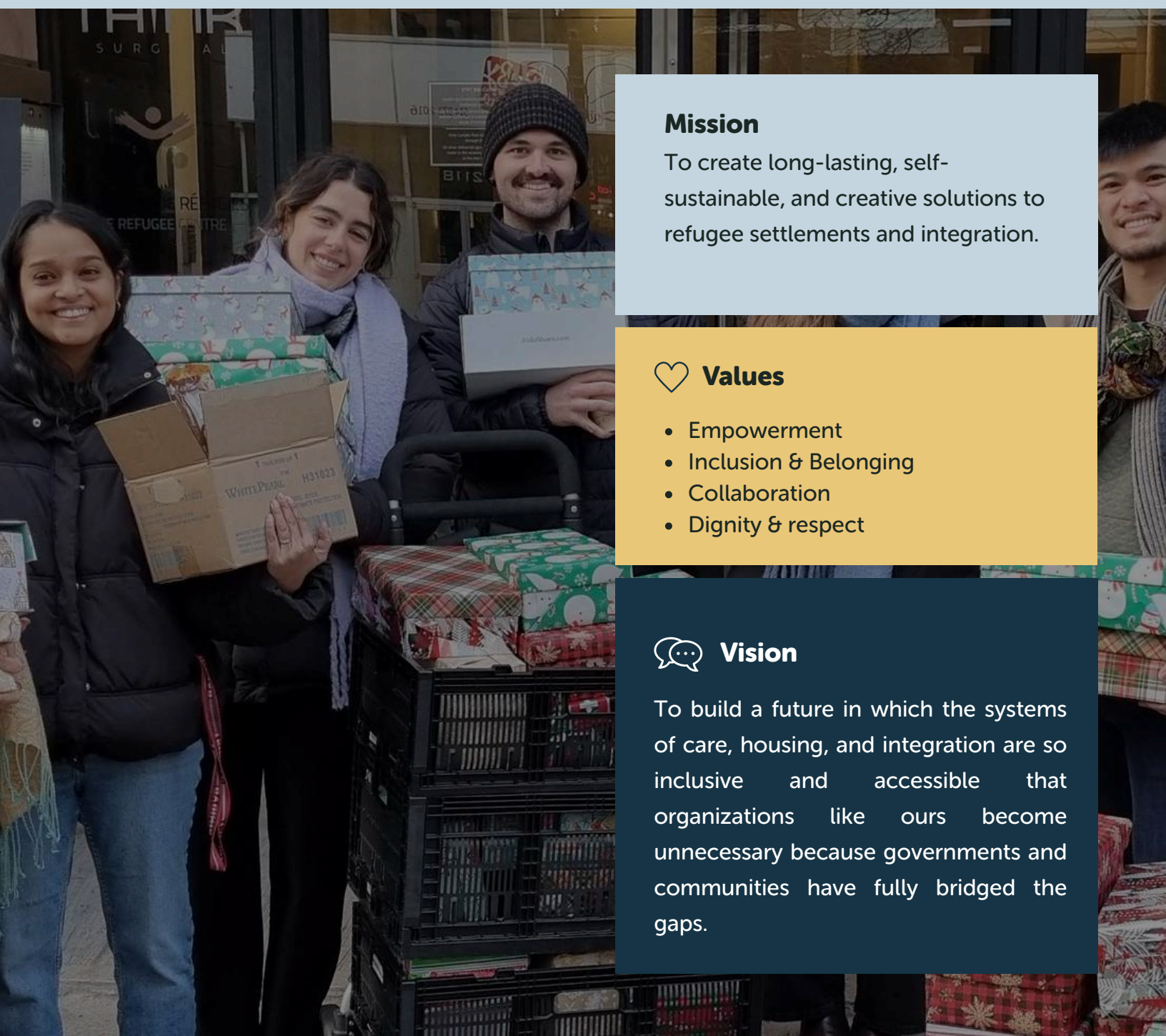
To create long-lasting, self-sustainable, and creative solutions to refugee settlements and integration.

Values

- Empowerment
- Inclusion & Belonging
- Collaboration
- Dignity & respect

Vision

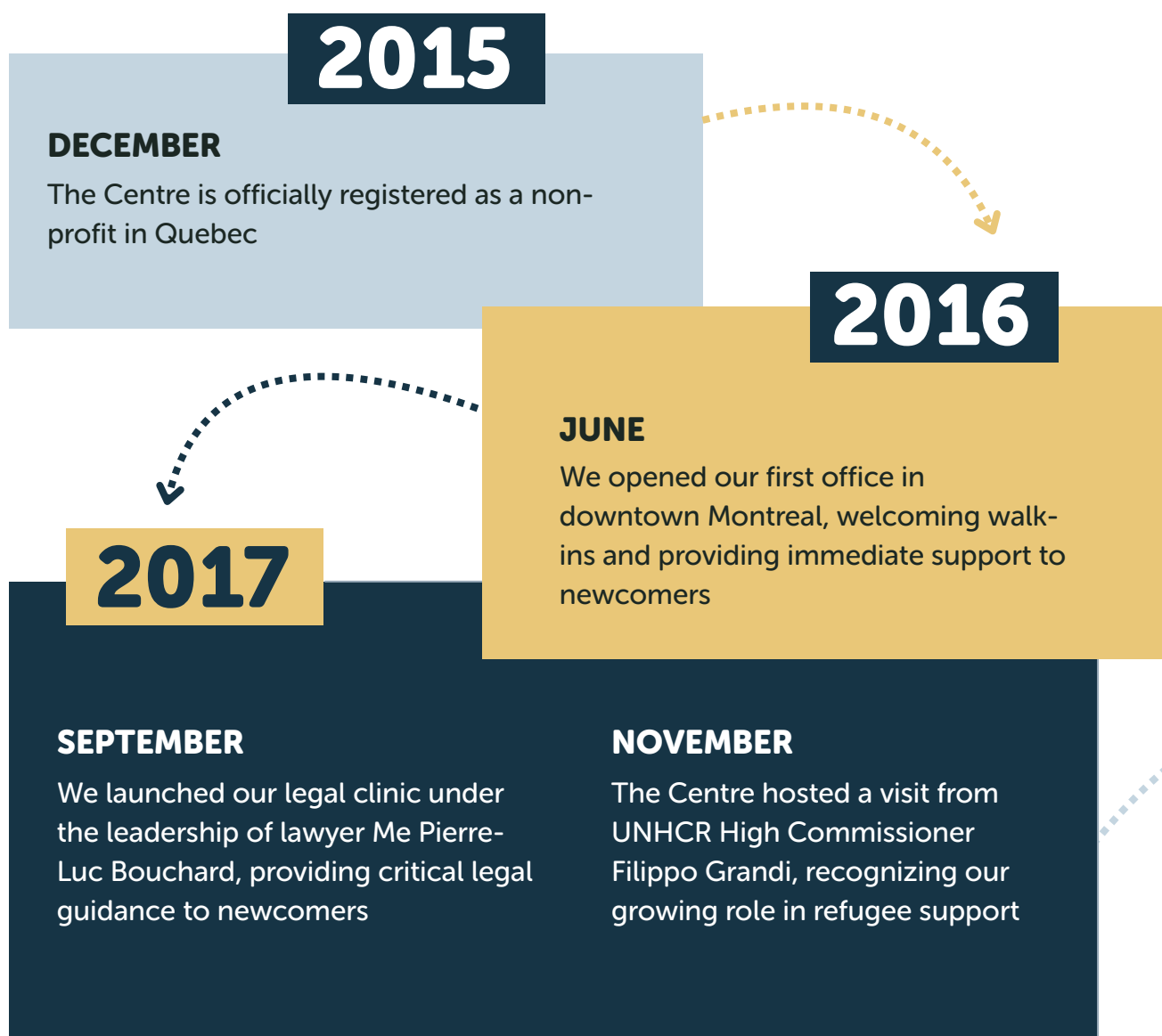
To build a future in which the systems of care, housing, and integration are so inclusive and accessible that organizations like ours become unnecessary because governments and communities have fully bridged the gaps.



Our History

The Centre was born from a shared conviction among friends at a time of global urgency, during the mass displacement of over one million Syrians in 2015. As images of families crossing dangerous waters and children clinging to life filled our screens, a simple but urgent question took root: how could we help those who would arrive here in Montreal?

What began as grassroots support – assisting with CVs, finding temporary shelter, and navigating complex administrative forms – has since grown into a vital frontline organization. Today, the Centre stands as a trusted anchor, still driven by the same compassion and responsibility that first sparked its creation nearly ten years ago.



Our History

2024**JANUARY**

Expansion of our offices to accommodate our growing team

2023**MAY**

Launched of our transitional housing program, built on an innovative model to support newcomers in precarious housing situations

2022**MAY**

We launched our Pay It Forward Fund, providing urgent support for newcomers in need

2020**MARCH**

We sponsored our first Syrian family, directly supporting resettlement and integration in Montreal

NOVEMBER

With support from the Red Cross, we launched the Health & Wellness department, which quickly became a cornerstone of our services

2018**JANUARY**

Our first audience at the IRB, marking the Centre's tangible impact on refugee cases

Our team

Everyone who contributes to The Refugee Centre – whether staff, volunteers, or board members – is part of our collective strength. Their dedication, skills, and solidarity allow us to provide support, welcome, and hope to each person who joins us, every single day.

MANAGEMENT TEAM

ABDULLA DAOUD

Executive Director

KINAN SWAID

Director of Operations & Settlement and Integration

ANISSA JEEROBURKHAN

Director of Community Health

NATASHA GUERRIERO

Director of Housing Department

PIERRE-LUC BOUCHARD

Head Lawyer of the Legal Clinic in Quebec

BRETT HOWIE

Head Lawyer of the Legal Clinic in Montreal

CAMILLE FURNEL

Director of Outreach and Communications

ALINA MURAD

Director of Federal Government Relations

DIMITRI TOPALOGLOU

Director of Software Development

LEGAL TEAM

SUZANNE NEWING

Lawyer

CLAUDIA MOUANGUÉ

Paralegal

JESSICA RANGER

Legal Officer

JAVIER GARCIA

Legal intern

FAWAZ HALLOUM

Student

LAURA NUNEZ

Case Officer

RACHEL MCKENZIE

Student

MARIANA LASSO

Student

MINNA BUAN

Student

ALICE HARDY

Student

ALEXANDER MCPHAIL

Legal intern

MICHELLE MURRAY-SCHLITT

Student

Our team

NARAIN YUCEL

Student

GAJANAN VELUPILLAI

Student

VIVIANE AUDETTE BASTAN

Student

HEALTH & WELLNESS TEAM

FRANSHESCA CARMIGLIA ARRIAGADA

Lead Case Manager

HEYDAR ENSHA

Caseworker

HANA SHERAFATI

Caseworker

MAJD AUDI

Caseworker

NAJLA CHENIOUNI

Caseworker

MAHSA KHALLAGHI ZADEH

Caseworker

ELIAS-YOSEF MASSARWEH

Caseworker

LAURA RENDON

Caseworker

DIEGO FRASER-DEL-CARPIO

Caseworker

SETTLEMENT & INTEGRATION TEAM

DERICK ABRIGU

Employment Services
Manager

CASSANDRE BOUCHER

Resettlement and
Integration Counsellor

SOPHIE FARIA-BEAUREGARD

Resettlement and
Integration Counsellor

NATALIA IBANEZ

Resettlement and
Integration Counsellor

MARCELA MARQUES DE QUEIROZ

Employment Counsellor

ABDOULAYE MORLAYE BANGOURA

Resettlement and Employment
Program Coordinator

HOUSING TEAM

SEAN LEVIS

Housing Research &
Development Coordinator

MELISSA LOPEZ

Housing Caseworker

REBECCA NOVAIS LUQUE

Housing Caseworker

Our team

LEARNING CENTRE

MOHAMED FATTAHI

French teacher

SHAYAN MOHARERZADEH

English Teacher

FRONT DESK TEAM

ELLA BROWN

Office Manager

CATHERINE HARDER

Office Manager

JUMANA KHAFAGI

Office Manager

KENDALL FAGAN

Intern

LEA ELEID

Intern

BELLA NIYUNGEKO

Intern

ÉQUIPE COMMUNICATIONS

SARAH ABDELSHAMY

Marketing &
Communications Manager

MANON KHAROYAN

Communications Agent

JEREMY SPELVEDA

Communications Agent



Our Volunteers

THANK YOU TO EACH AND EVERYONE OF YOU!

Our volunteers give their time and their hearts. Without them, our work wouldn't have the same impact.

- AIYANA WAZER
- ANABEL MELLINGER
- ANDREA MAMBRO
- ARANZA RIVERA NUNCIO
- ARIA LUCYK
- ARIANNA FIALON
- ARZOU LASHKARI
- ASHLESHA SHRINGARPURE
- ASIA BENFORD
- CHELSEA WANG
- DIANA PRATES
- ESTHER MONCADA
- HAMZAH SUHEIMAT
- HANNIA ESTRELLA COLORADO PEREZ
- HÉLÈNE BÉDARD
- HOLLY SCOTT-BLACK
- HUGH LANGIS
- INES AMIGORENA
- IRIS BARENNE
- JAIME ABARCA
- JONATHAN YOYU
- KATHRYN GRUPP
- ADAMOU MAMADOU
- MAGGIE CAMIGLIA ARRIAGADA
- MAKHTAR DRAME FALL
- MAYA GAIND
- MIRA HAJJAR
- NOA SCHLEIFER
- ZORAIDA FORNIELES
- SOPHIA LI
- AMIRA NAAS
- YASMINE DIVANGAHI
- UMA VELAMURI



Our Impact

Nearly

9,300

refugees, refugee claimants, and families have been served at the Centre

466

legal appointments

supporting newcomer individuals and families as they navigate complex legal processes

27

units in our housing program

allowing us to provide provide a temporary home to beneficiaries in precarious situations, many on the verge of homelessness

220

new clients

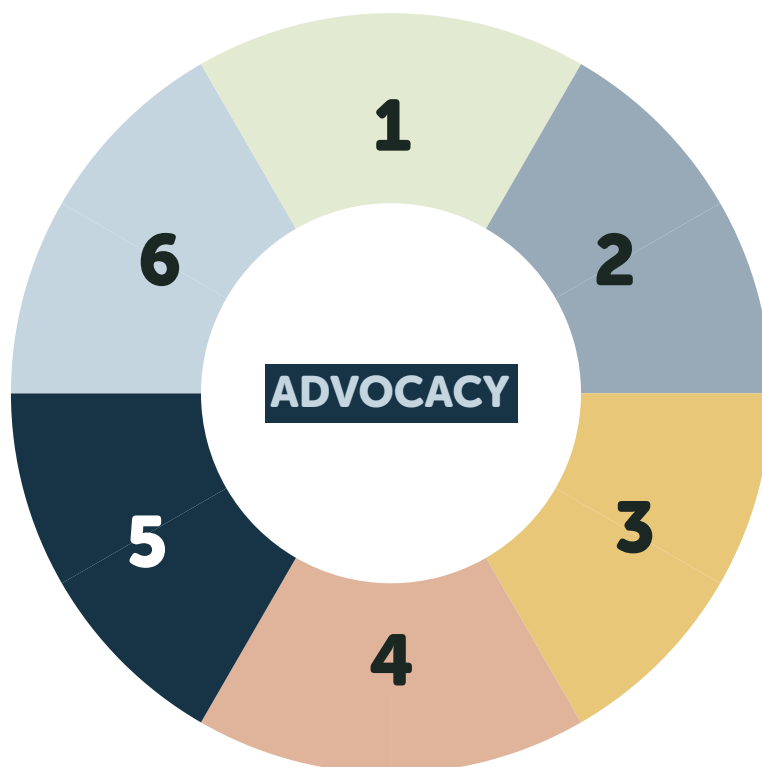
supported by our caseworkers, providing personalized guidance from the moment they arrive

333

workshops delivered

to equip newcomers with practical tools – from writing a CV to navigating the healthcare system

Our Work



HEALTH & WELLNESS

- Intake System & Case Management
- Social Wellness & Belonging Programs
- Health Access & Medical Navigation
- Basic Needs & Emergency Relief

SETTLEMENT & INTEGRATION

- Settlement Orientation
- Financial Literacy
- Academic Orientation
- Employment Readiness

LEGAL CLINIC

- Navigating Legal Procedures
- Legal Representation
- Emergency Legal Support

FRONT DESK

- First point of contact with beneficiaries

LEARNING CENTRE

- Language program
- Digital literacy program

HOUSING

- Transitional housing program



Our frontline services



Front Desk



The Refugee Centre's front desk is often the first point of contact for newcomers. We've welcomed everyone: from families arriving with suitcases straight from the airport to individuals in urgent need of housing and seeking to regularize their status. More than just a reception area, the Front Desk is the frontline of our work and a critical source of guidance for people who walk through our doors.

Our team greets and orients people in seven languages: French, English, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Farsi, and Mandarin – helping around:

50 people per day

It is during this critical step that our team assesses each person's needs to determine the appropriate support and recommend them to our intake system when follow-up support is required.

The Front Desk offers a wide range of services designed to help clients feel supported and informed:

- Assisting with government forms and paperwork
 - Updating addresses for the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB)
 - Requesting document extensions to submit your Basis of Claim (BOC)
 - Verifying immigration status
 - Replacing immigration documents
- Providing basic orientation on the refugee claim process and referring them to other organizations for specialized services when necessary
- Interpreting letters, forms, and official documents
- Connecting people with government agencies and community resources

Health & Wellness

Newcomers to Canada, particularly refugee claimants, are extremely vulnerable to experiencing both mental and physical health challenges. Our Health & Wellness department offers accessible, culturally sensitive healthcare and wellness support to newcomers. Through partnerships with medical professionals and community organizations, we offer essential services, including workshops on how to navigate the healthcare system, support on how to connect with mental health professionals and an array of wellness activities, striving to ensure that all newcomers receive the support they need to thrive.

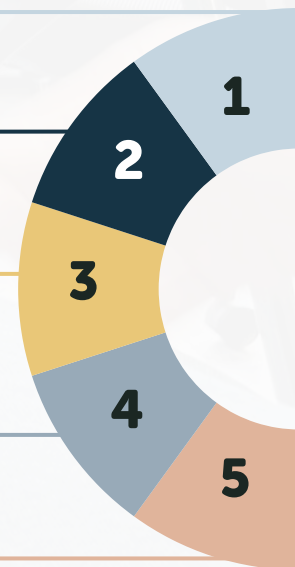
**INTAKE SYSTEM &
CASE MANAGEMENT**

**HEALTH ACCESS &
MEDICAL NAVIGATION**

**SOCIAL WELLNESS &
BELONGING PROGRAMS**

**BASIC NEEDS &
EMERGENCY RELIEF**

RESEARCH & ADVOCACY



Health & Wellness

INTAKE SYSTEM & CASE MANAGEMENT

In May 2023, we launched our intake system, a dedicated pathway for people who need more specialized care and that aims to provide psychosocial support while helping newcomers navigate their settlement needs. Its goal is simple but effective: to build trust, provide continuity, and make sure every client gets the help they actually need, when they need it.

Referrals from the front desk or from partner organizations

Every person that walks through our doors gets a basic assessment at first contact and those with more complex needs are referred to the intake system. Our close partners can also refer their clients to our intake system.

One-on-one support

Clients receive tailored care plans based on a thorough needs assessment that combine our in-house services with referrals to partner organizations.

Holistic care

The system addresses settlement, mental health, legal support, and other interrelated needs, offering individualized support to navigate their unique conditions and needs.

Cultural and linguistic alignment

Whenever possible, clients are paired with caseworkers who share their language and cultural background to build trust and a sense of belonging.

Last year,

220

new clients were processed in our intake system, with each case needing on average 6 to 8 months of follow up.

We processed in our intake system,

95

families from

87

different countries

From an age range of

18 years old

to

87 years old

Health & Wellness

HEALTH ACCESS & MEDICAL NAVIGATION

This stream of work supports clients in navigating Quebec's complex healthcare system with confidence and clarity. Many newcomers face barriers such as language, lack of documentation, or unfamiliarity with how to access care.

Booking Appointments & Paperwork Workshops

These workshops support newcomers with key healthcare administrative tasks, such as applying for RAMQ, CSQ or IFHP coverage, and provide hands-on assistance to book medical appointments.

Health Promotion Workshops

We've offered 6 health promotion workshops ranging from Allergy Management to Menstrual Hygiene, which more than 60 newcomers attended.

Partnerships

Community Health Alliance Project (CHAP) :

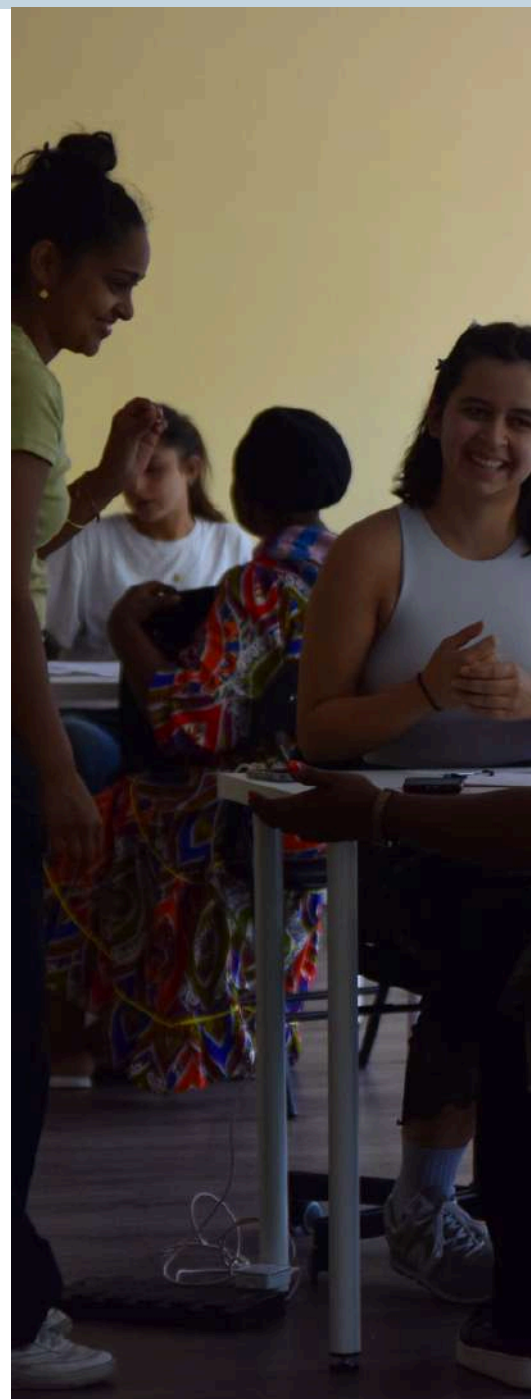
A course offered by McGill University's Faculty of Medicine. We've partnered with CHAP for two years and three students from the program completed their internships with us this year.

Max Bell School of Public Policy :

This was our first year of partnership working together, and three policy students joined us as interns to support the development of our health network.

In Community :

A partnership we've maintained for three years. This Quebec organization places medical students across the province, and this year, we welcomed four students at the Centre.



418
participants

61
workshops

Health & Wellness

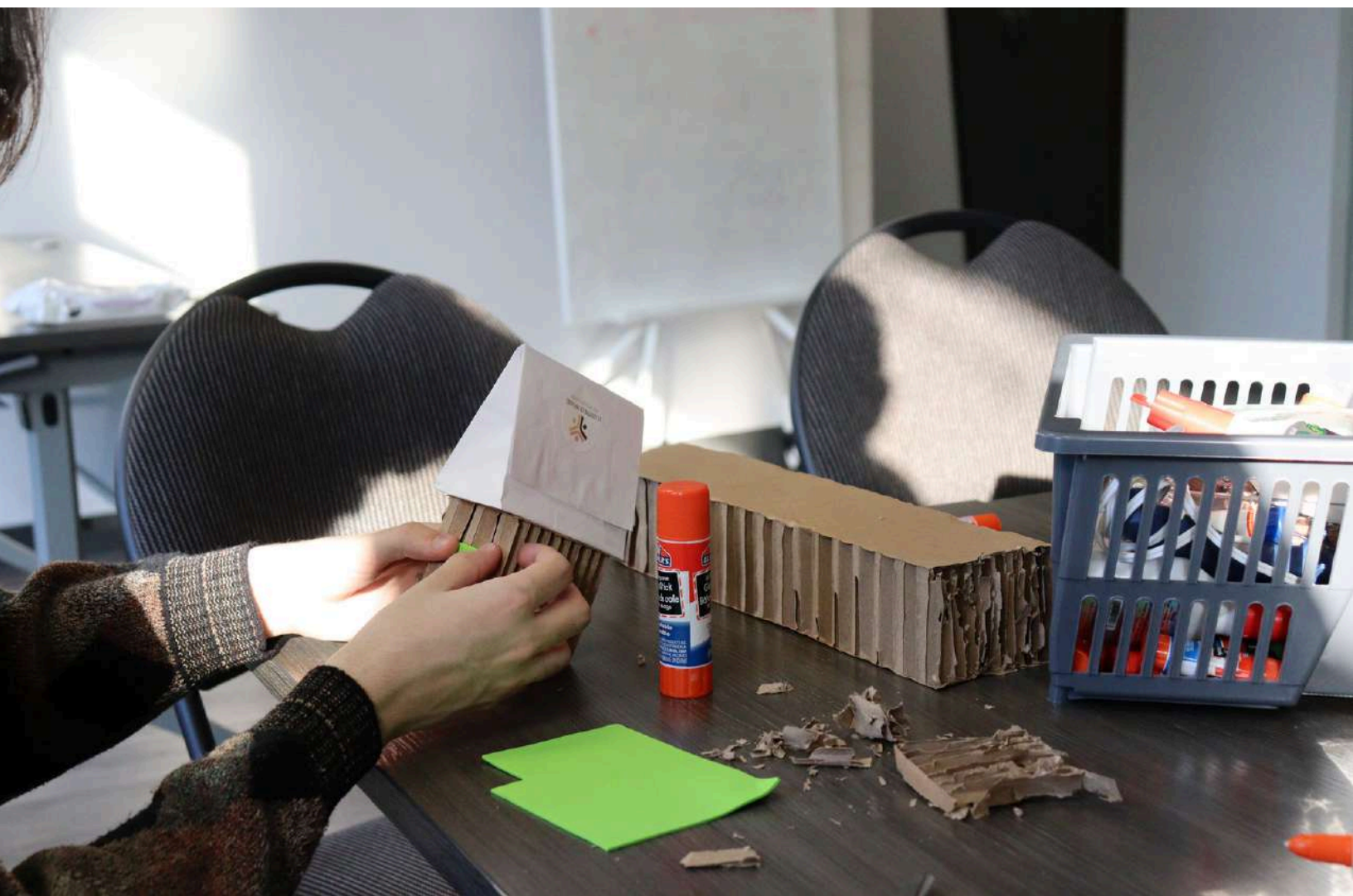
SOCIAL WELLNESS & BELONGING PROGRAMS

At The Refugee Centre, social activities play an important role in promoting community, inclusion, and emotional well-being. Every week, we offer a variety of recurring activities such as yoga, cinema nights, art workshops, support groups and cooking. This helps clients combat isolation and gives them a chance to connect with others, build supportive relationships, and feel a sense of belonging.

SUPPORT GROUPS

3

Cohorts in total – two for moms and one for young men

18 sessions**48** participants

Health & Wellness

BASIC NEEDS & EMERGENCY RELIEF

This stream ensures that clients have access to the essentials needed for daily living, especially during times of crisis or transition. Many newcomers arrive with limited resources and face immediate challenges in securing food, hygiene products, and other basic necessities. Through our services, we try to provide short-term relief while promoting long-term stability and dignity for individuals and families as they begin their resettlement journey.

EMERGENCY FOOD BASKETS

2,900 baskets distributed

Partnerships

Moisson Montréal • Innovation Jeunes

EMERGENCY RELIEF

\$ 5,450

Amount covered by the Centre

Partnerships

PRAIDA • IRCC • Local hotels and hostels

HYGIENE BASKETS

250 baskets distributed

54\$ average value of a basket

We have helped:

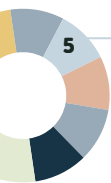
110 families

150 women

Partnerships

Shoppers Foundation for Women's Health

Health & Wellness



ADVOCACY & RESEARCH

This stream is central to our work: we draw on on-the-ground experience to identify obstacles, solutions, and systemic gaps, using applied research and program evaluation to document challenges and translate field insights into our advocacy.

From Barrier to Care

From Barrier to Care is a tailored presentation for service providers on how to work with newcomers through a culture- and trauma-informed lens. This training aims to explain everything you need to know about the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) and how to access medical care for refugees and refugee claimants.

8

**presentations
given to 10
community
organizations**

Peter-McGill Food Security Committee

A network of community and nonprofit organizations in the Peter McGill area working on food insecurity to share resources, discuss challenges, and develop collective responses. The network strengthens local connections, enhances organizational capacity, and promotes effective resource sharing to better address food insecurity in the community.

CoSaMi

The CoSaMi Initiative (Concertation pour la santé des personnes migrantes) is a project led by the Centre d'expertise sur le bien-être et l'état de santé physique des réfugiés et des demandeurs d'asile (CERDA) and the SHERPA University Institute. It aims to improve access to healthcare for migrants with precarious status, including asylum seekers and uninsured individuals. We participate as a frontline organization on the advisory committee, sharing our field expertise and helping to develop practical solutions.

Medical Complication Tracking

One of the most critical structural gaps we've tracked is the delay between the expiry of IFHP coverage and the start of RAMQ eligibility, which leaves claimants without medical protection. This project maps these delays to build a strong case for policy change.

Settlement & Integration

Starting life in a new country can be overwhelming for newcomers and refugee claimants, who often face barriers in accessing education, employment, and essential services. Our Settlement & Integration Department provides practical support to help navigate these challenges and to ease their transition into society. Through orientation workshops, academic guidance, navigating the job market, and increasing financial literacy, we connect clients with the access benefits, programs and opportunities they need to build stability. The goal is to foster autonomy and integration from day one.

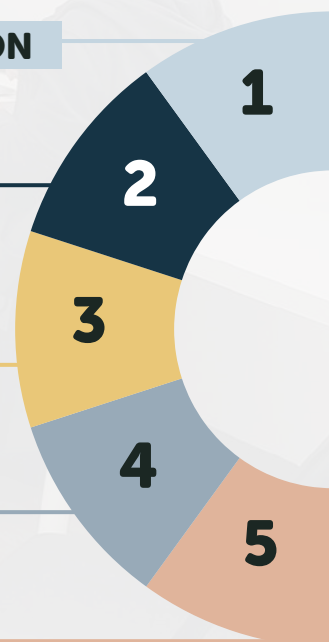
SETTLEMENT & ORIENTATION

ACADEMIC ORIENTATION

FINANCIAL LITERACY

EMPLOYMENT READINESS

ADVOCACY & RESEARCH



Settlement & Integration

SETTLEMENT ORIENTATION

This stream helps newcomers understand and access essential government programs such as welfare, francization, driving license exchanges, and more. Through group workshops and follow-ups, the team ensures that clients can begin their settlement journey with the right tools and information.

WELFARE

To support beneficiaries in applying for financial assistance.

Around
50%

of workshop participants request a follow-up after their first application.

DRIVER'S LICENSE

To guide on how to exchange a foreign driver's license with the SAAQ.

FRANCIZATION

To assist with enrolment in full-time or part-time French language courses.

500+ participants joined our workshops

48 workshops given in total

Partnerships

OPEQ supplied 303 refurbished laptops to the Centre at a low-cost, helping us provide clients with a critical resource for their settlement needs.

ACADEMIC ORIENTATION

This stream supports clients in facilitating education processes such as diploma equivalency, improving digital literacy, and planning for future learning goals. From school registration to online learning, the team helps bridge gaps in academic access for newcomers.

48 ateliers

238 participants

Partnerships

- Coursera provided the Centre with 200 free licenses for online courses to help our beneficiaries earn academic certifications.
- We were also able to offer credential recognition through our partnership with World Education Services (WES)

Settlement & Integration



FINANCIAL LITERACY

Through this stream, we help clients navigate Canada's financial system with hands-on support. The goal is to promote financial stability and literacy.

Our services include : creating CRA and ClicSécur accounts; understanding taxes and pay slips; budgeting; applying for SIN and EI or parental leave; opening bank accounts; managing credit and bill payments; and resolving fraud or benefit issues.

Partnerships

With the financial support of ScotiaBank and CIBC



EMPLOYMENT READINESS

This year, the Centre launched three pilot workshops to assess the employment needs of newcomers and refugee claimants. Insights gathered from both qualitative and quantitative data will help us develop a more comprehensive and effective employment stream within the department, designed to truly facilitate newcomers' entry into the workforce. Employment services prepare clients for the job market through personalized guidance, job search support, referrals to employers, and readiness workshops. The goal is to help clients enter the workforce and build career pathways.

Partnership

Atwater's Library supported with facilitation of employment readiness workshops



ADVOCACY & RESEARCH

Every trimester, the department builds a report that documents statistics, impact stories, and assessment of needs on a broad level in order to translate these qualitative data into: identification of structural flaws and recommendation of institutional or local solutions.

Partnerships

Human Relations Department at Concordia University. This year we partnered with Concordia on two Capstone projects supervised by our department. The projects were aimed at exploring key challenges faced by the newcomers we serve and developed ways to integrate meaningful social activities into our existing workshops.

Legal Clinic

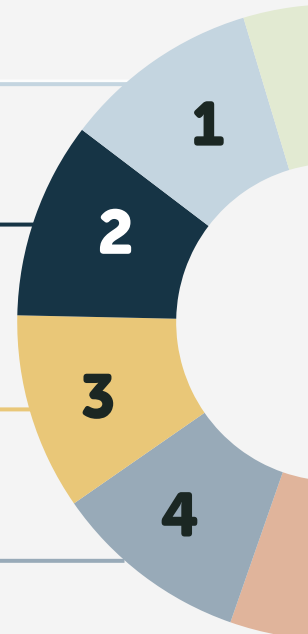
Refugees and refugee claimants often require continuous legal support to navigate complex challenges. Such assistance is hard to access, and our clinic is among the few that accept legal aid mandates to deliver the services our clients need. We handle refugee claims, work and study permits, immigration applications on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, pre-removal risk assessments (PRRA), judicial reviews, and appeals.

NAVIGATING LEGAL PROCEDURES

EMERGENCY LEGAL SUPPORT

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

ADVOCACY & RESEARCH



Since Fall 2024, the Centre has been expanding its legal clinic model in Quebec City.

In addition to our full-time lawyer, we are joined by a legal intern through our partnership with Université de Laval.

Legal Clinic

NAVIGATING LEGAL PROCEDURES

This stream helps refugee claimants and protected persons navigate the complex legal procedures essential to their settlement, from refugee claims to permits and applications. Through free, reliable workshops, our legal team provides guidance and support to address language barriers, limited digital literacy, and other challenges, helping clients prevent complications and administrative gaps early in the process.

IRCC Portal Workshop

This workshop serves as the first step in the refugee claim process, guiding claimants to navigate the IRCC Portal confidently and complete their applications accurately from start to finish. It is offered twice a week, once at The Refugee Centre location and once at PRAIDA, where participants are provided with computers.

Basis of Claim (BOC) Validation Workshop

This workshop supports people in completing their Basis of Claim, a crucial step in officially starting their refugee claim and obtaining protection in Canada. By reviewing and validating each BOC, we help clients submit complete, properly formatted applications, reducing the risk of delays, errors, or abandoned hearings.

Legal Support Workshop

These are one-hour, one-on-one appointments where our legal team works directly with a claimant to review their paperwork specifically as it relates to work permit renewal and the permanent residency application.

126 IRCC workshops

with a total of

1,167
people registered

We have supported over
claims, including entire
refugee families

200

The Legal Support workshop is
held weekly, has booked over

100 appointments

77% for work permit
renewals

23%

for applications of permanent
residency.

Legal Clinic

2

EMERGENCY LEGAL SUPPORT

This stream offers one-on-one legal support for refugees and claimants who are processed in our intake system. In these appointments, the legal team offers support in mapping legal options, renewing a work or study permit, preparing a BOC, or gathering evidence for legal hearings. Our team guides clients step by step, making sure they feel confident and supported throughout the process.

We have held over

366 appointments

3

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

This stream provides full legal representation for refugee claimants, a service few can access. Many of our clients are in precarious situations, without the means to hire a private lawyer. Our team represents them at every stage, from preparing and submitting refugee claims to presenting evidence, handling judicial reviews, pre-removal risk assessments, and humanitarian and compassionate applications. By standing with clients throughout the process, we ensure their cases are heard and properly advocated for.

We have accepted

52

new legal cases, this year

4

ADVOCACY & RESEARCH

Our legal team regularly consolidate and analyze the legal challenges refugees and refugee claimants face daily, including bureaucratic delays, abandoned claims, missed hearings, and long wait times. By consolidating this information, we generate evidence and legal insights that inform policy discussions with stakeholders and strengthen our advocacy for a fairer, more accessible system for all claimants.

This year, we have support our clients through

23

legal hearings

The Refugee Centre intervened in the Kanyinda case before the Supreme Court of Canada, advocating for the right of children from asylum-seeking families to access subsidized childcare.

Our legal team's submission focused on providing additional context regarding the effects of intersectional identities and the multiple challenges faced by migrant families.

Housing

Transitional Housing Program

Launched in 2023 amid the housing crisis, this program was created to offer transitional housing to refugees who are exiting shelters or are in precarious housing situations. Often missing from the discourse on housing are the systemic barriers faced by newcomers: limited or no credit history, low income, lack of landlord references, language barriers, and discrimination based on status, etc.

The program is designed not only to provide a temporary home but also to offer an environment where residents can regain stability and rebuild their lives. The apartments are fully furnished and we pair roommates with shared cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Throughout their stay, they work closely with a caseworker at the Centre who develops an individualized support plan with clear milestones and timelines, helping them transition out of the program with a stable path toward settlement and integration.

Ultimately, the project aims to give people in precarious housing situations the conditions they need to establish long-term housing and build their community life in Montreal.

We have a
total of
27
housing units

**6 to 8
months**

Average time of a person in
the program

Housing

Partnerships

Through our partnership with Bread & Beyond, we were able to provide 16 kits filled with essential items for the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom. Each kit, valued at \$90, offers crucial support to participants as they settle into a new home. Once they secure permanent housing, they can take these essentials with them, ensuring a smoother transition to their next chapter.

We delivered 4 workshops at PRAIDA on housing rights, navigating the private rental market, and finding roommates for individuals in housing shelters.

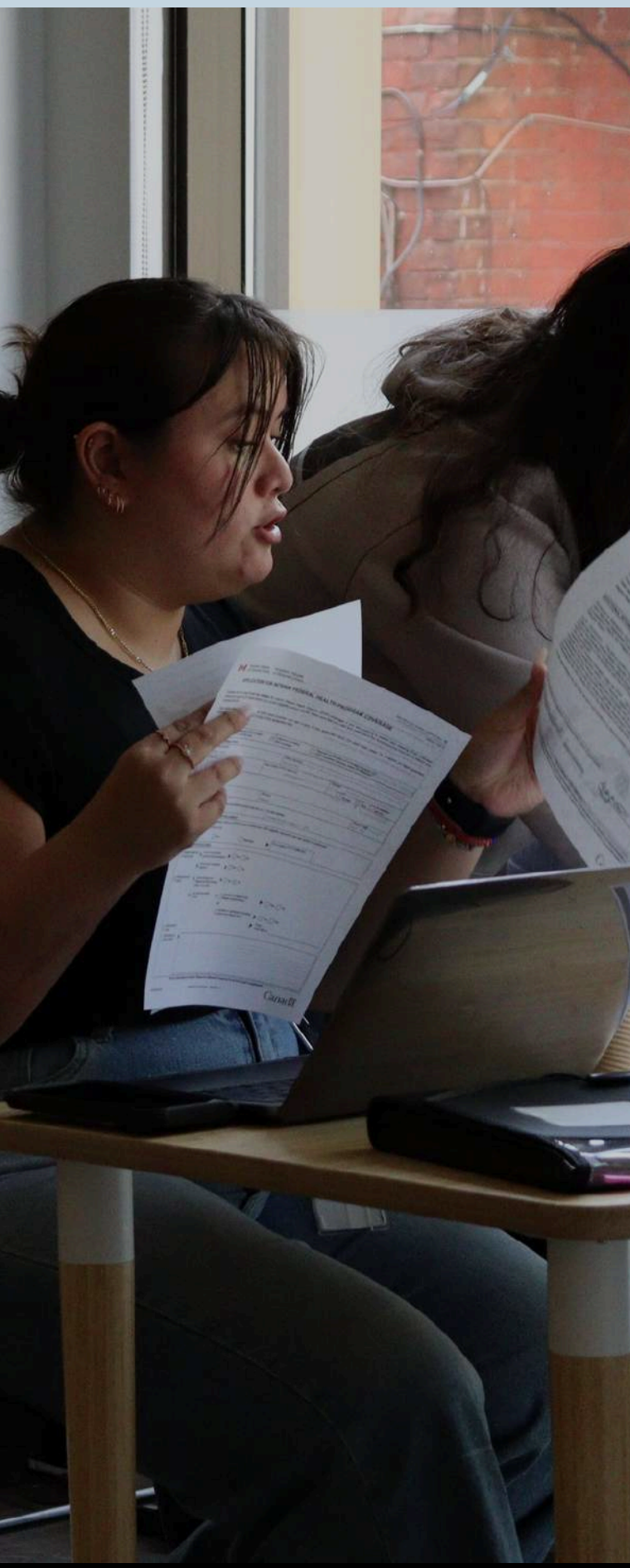
How does our model work?

Our transitional housing program is built on a simple idea: use the leverage of an organization to unlock stable housing for people who would otherwise be excluded from the private market. We negotiate bulk leases with landlords, and pay rent up front for the year in exchange for a discount that we pass on directly to refugee families. While living in these units, they can build positive landlord references, making it easier to transition into the regular rental market.

For landlords, the model reduces risk and vacancy, replaces turnover costs with predictable income, and is supported through a structure where they donate, in cash, the value of the rent discount to our charitable partners. They then receive a charitable tax receipt for that donated amount. For our clients, it creates a clear pathway from emergency shelter to stable, dignified housing and then into long term independence. As rents are repaid, the funds are recycled to secure the next set of units, making the program financially regenerative and scalable over time.



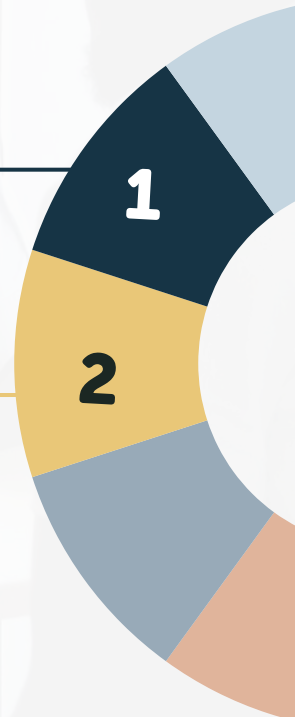
Learning Centre



The Learning Centre provides a supportive environment for newcomers to develop essential skills through language classes and digital literacy training workshops. By offering accessible education and resources, we empower newcomers to gain the knowledge they need to succeed. All of our courses are free and open to all newcomers.

**LANGUAGE
PROGRAM**

**DIGITAL
LITERACY PROGRAM**



Learning Centre



LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Language skills are critical for accessing education, securing employment, and building community life. Our language courses began before 2023, at a time when francization programs were not yet available to refugee claimants. We continue to offer these courses to help newcomers navigate long wait times for official programs and to accelerate their settlement process.

FRENCH CLASSES

Our French courses are offered at three levels (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) and are taught by our in-house French teacher.

198 beneficiaries participated in our French classes

ENGLISH CLASSES

While Quebec is primarily francophone, bilingualism is often required to access the job market. Our English courses respond to client requests and are offered at three levels, taught by our in-house English teacher. These courses complement our French programming and help newcomers build practical language skills for work and daily life.

270 beneficiaries participated in our English classes

Partnerships

- AKELIUS provided us with 16 tablets and 16 headphone sets to support digital learning
- School of Continuing Studies at McGill University (Spring 2024): Through the English Language and Culture Program, newcomers with work permits or brown paper status could access free language courses at McGill in addition to our own in-house classes.

CONVERSATION CIRCLES

The Conversation Circle grew out of our language courses to give participants an informal space to practice their language skills. Led by volunteers, this weekly program fosters peer learning, confidence, and community connection.

This workshop occurs on a weekly basis since March 2025

Learning Centre

DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAM

In 2025, we launched our Digital Literacy program to respond to a growing need among newcomers navigating Canada's complex systems. Digital skills are critical for accessing services, education, employment, and government processes. Rather than providing short-term "band-aid" solutions, this program focuses on building lasting skills and confidence. It initially supported clients who received OPEQ (Ordinateurs pour les écoles du Québec) assistance, helping them set up laptops, navigate digital platforms, and develop the essential skills needed to thrive in a digital world.

This workshop has occurred on a weekly basis since May 2025 and nearly

60

participants
have attended this program





Beyond the frontlines

Advocacy

The Refugee Centre's Advocacy department works alongside political and community partners to create well-informed policies that positively impact the refugee community in Quebec and nationally. Advocacy is central to everything we do – informing all of our programs and services. Through careful assessments of the barriers and challenges refugees face, our team transforms these insights into evidence-based policy recommendations and briefs. These resources allow the Centre to engage in strategic interventions, address systemic gaps, and influence meaningful change within broader social and political frameworks.

Active participation in **12**

committees on the municipal, provincial, and federal levels

2 policy briefs

1 report

2 interns in partnership with Concordia University's SCPA

1 article

From frontline to advocacy

Advocacy is central to all of the Centre's work. By connecting day-to-day client support with systemic analysis, we identify gaps in the immigration system and intervene where they affect people most. This year, the Advocacy department supported 20 individuals facing issues such as long processing times, wrongful abandonment of claims, and other barriers. We also addressed broader systemic challenges, including work permit delays, documentation status processing, and gaps in Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) information and training.

Drawing on what we see on the ground, we published an op-ed in [Policy Alternatives](#) spotlighting barriers around work permits and identification, and putting forward tangible policy solutions.



Advocacy

Advocacy in Quebec and Federal Immigration Planning

As part of our advocacy work, the Centre actively contributed to the strategic process of immigration planning at both the Quebec and federal levels, ensuring that policies reflect the real-life experiences of migrants and support their inclusion and integration.

Quebec

As part of the 2026–2029 Quebec immigration planning consultation, our intervention was primarily around highlighting the specific needs of people with precarious status, the importance of stable funding for community organizations, and the need for a more coherent system that supports lasting integration. As part of this intervention we:

- Submitted a [policy brief](#)
- Participated in [public hearings](#) with the Commission des relations avec les citoyens

Canada

As part of the federal consultation on the 2026–2028 Immigration Levels Plan, our intervention focused on ensuring that target levels reflect on-the-ground realities and uphold refugee protection and inclusion. As part of this work, we:

- Participated in the federal government's early consultation process by completing its survey, directly contributing to the development of recommendations
- Engaged directly with federal Members of Parliament on immigration levels
- Submitted a policy brief to federal members, including the Immigration Minister

Advocacy

Advocacy on Bill C-2 – Border Security Legislation

In June 2025, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-2, the Strong Borders Act. Framed as a public safety measure, the bill raises serious concerns regarding human rights, access to asylum, and the erosion of protection mechanisms in Canada. Our advocacy response unfolded on two complementary levels: direct organizational intervention and coordinated coalition-based action.

Direct Organizational Advocacy

Throughout summer 2025, our team conducted an in-depth analysis of Bill C-2 to assess its implications for refugee communities and the broader settlement and legal sector. This work allowed us to intervene directly with decision-makers and oversight bodies. As part of this work, we:

- Conducted a detailed internal policy and legal analysis of Bill C-2 and its sector-wide impacts
- Met with Members of Parliament from both the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security (SECU) and the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (CIMM)
- Submitted a formal policy brief to these committees and senators outlining our concerns and recommendations

Coalition-Based Advocacy

At the Quebec level, we are an active member of the Front commun – a broad coalition of organizations and advocacy groups united in opposition to Bill C-2 and structured around three working groups: communications, public mobilization, and parliamentary advocacy. Through the parliamentary advocacy committee, a joint brief was submitted to federal authorities on behalf of the coalition.

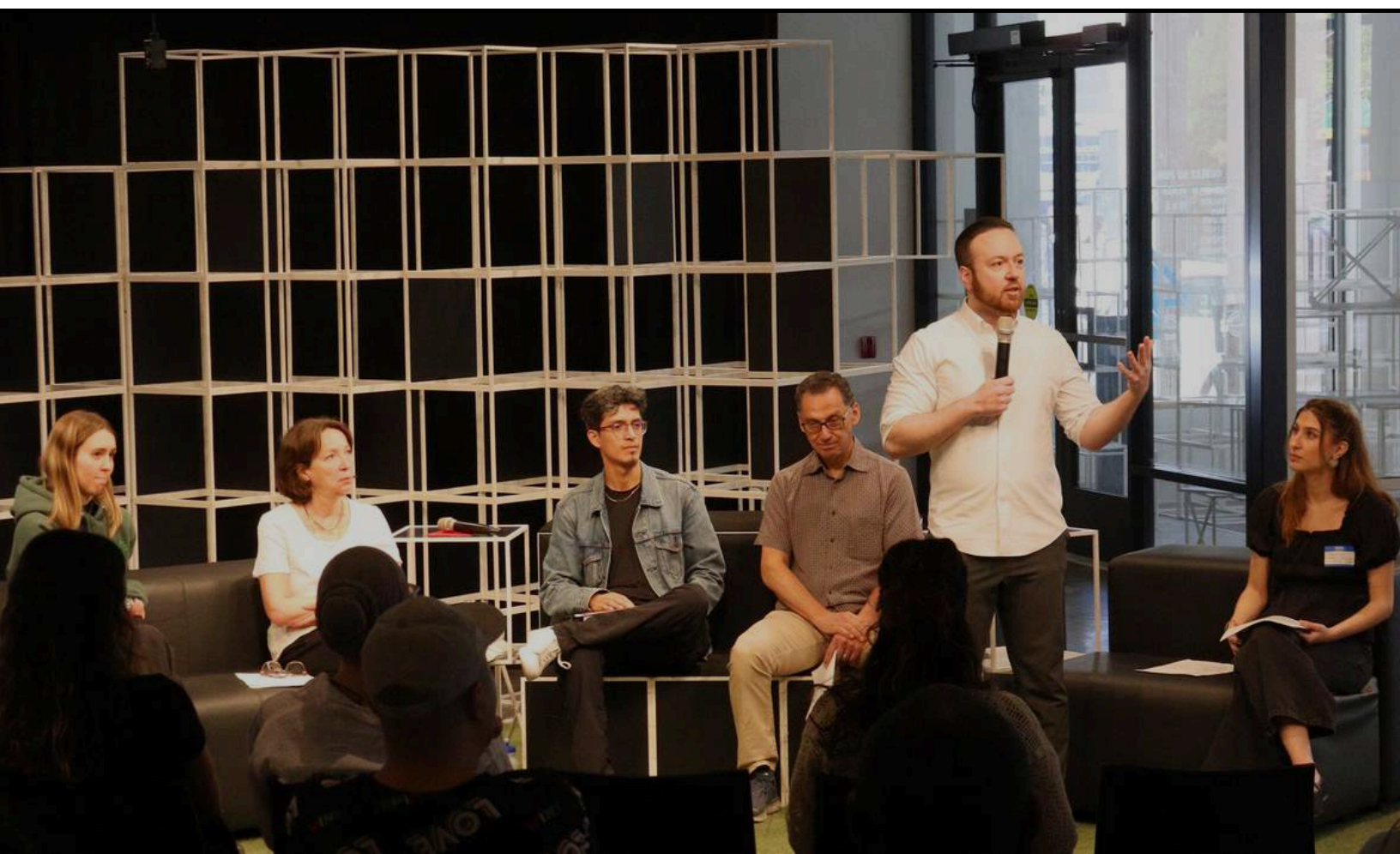
At the national level, we are a member of the pan-Canadian advocacy network of nearly 100 organizations working across immigration, civil liberties, digital surveillance, and human rights. The network meets regularly to share legislative analysis and coordinate advocacy strategies. Through this work, we contributed to The Refugee Law Lab's national consultation report on Bill C-12 – documenting the bill's legal and human rights consequences – and are active participants in the parliamentary strategy and policy recommendation working groups.

Plaidoyer

Access to Basic Needs

Ensuring refugees can meet their basic needs is a core focus of the Centre's advocacy. This year, rising housing insecurity, food insecurity, and limited access to healthcare drove a significant increase in demand for emergency support.

To highlight these challenges and foster sector-wide understanding, we hosted "Point of Entry Into... Pay It Forward," a live-streamed podcast event bringing together frontline organizations to share firsthand experiences. Building on these insights, we also published our first Pay It Forward report, translating frontline experience into data to guide collective learning and advocacy.



Advocacy

Committees & Coalition Engagement

Strong, strategic partnerships are essential to the Centre's advocacy work. By exchanging information, coordinating initiatives, and actively participating in coalitions and committees, we amplify the voices of migrants and asylum seekers with policymakers.

This year, we joined two new working groups:

- PERT (The Provincial Employment Roundtable): to collaborate on issues related to access to the labour market
- Internal working group of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (CIMM): to enable direct dialogue with policymakers and sharing on-the-ground realities

Municipal

Peter McGill Community Table

- Immigration Committee
- Food Security Committee
- Coordination Committee for the INclusion Project (led by CREMCV)

Provincial

Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes (TCRI)

- Member of TCRI
- Coordination Committee in the Protection stream
- Member of ADAQ Committee

Regroupement des organismes en hébergement pour personnes migrantes (ROHMI)

- Member of ROHMI
- Member of Board of Directors
- Member of Advocacy Committee
- Member of Communication Committee

Comité Santé Migrante (CoSaMi) of the CERDA

- Member of the advisory committee
- Issue-focused working groups

Advocacy

Front commun québécois contre le projet de loi C-2/C-12 et pour la justice migrante

- Member of the Front Commun
- Parliamentary Advocacy Subcommittee

Association québécoise des avocats et avocates en droit de l'immigration (AQAADI)

- Member Lawyers

The Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT)

- Sectoral Table on Employment Services

Federal

Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)

- Member organization of the CCR
- Treasurer on the Board of Directors
- Steering Committee of the Inland Protection Working Group

Internal Working Group for the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (CImm)

- Invited to participate in the Working Group's activities

National Newcomer Collective for Truth and Reconciliation

- Member
- Member of the Advisory Committee

The Canadian Associate of Refugee Lawyers (CARL)

- Member
- Advocacy Committee

US-Canada Cross-Border Network

- Member

Our Projects



Alongside our core departments, we develop and lead a range of projects that advance our mission in complementary ways. From emergency financial relief to public education through our podcast, these initiatives respond to both urgent needs and long-term challenges. Many are carried out in collaboration with partners across the sector, reflecting our belief that meaningful change is built collectively.

POINT OF ENTRY PODCAST

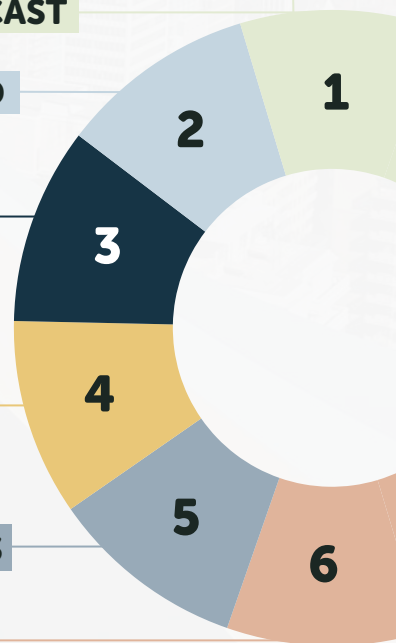
PAY IT FORWARD FUND

ALLOCANADA & DEVBLOC

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

READY TOUR SESSIONS

BRIGADES PROGRAM



ORIENTATION
ORIENTATION
CENTRE D'APPRENTISSAGE
LEARNING CENTRE
EMPLOI ET
ENTREPRENARIAT
EMPLOYMENT &
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AIDE JURIDIQUE
LEGAL AID
LOGEMENT DE TRANSITION
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
SERVICES FINANCIERS
FINANCIAL SERVICES

Our Projects

POINT OF ENTRY PODCAST

Now in its fourth year, the Centre's original podcast, Point of Entry, continues to amplify critical voices and provide accessible analysis on complex, intersectional issues affecting society and refugees. True to its name, the podcast serves as an entry point to topics that are often challenging to navigate, frequently featuring racialized and BIPOC community members and experts.

This year, we hosted for the first time an in-person live podcast recording, Point of Entry Into... Paying It Forward, highlighting our fund that provides urgent financial relief to refugees and claimants. In response to increasing barriers to food, housing, and healthcare, we invited frontline organizations to speak on these challenges. The episode not only raised awareness of these obstacles but also promoted the fund and informed our first report documenting these sector-wide trends.



12 themes

24 episodes

52 followers gained
in the last year

4,360 total listeners



Our Projects



PAY IT FORWARD FUND

Now in its third year, the Pay It Forward Fund has become a pillar of the Centre's frontline response. The fund was designed to allow us to act swiftly when systems fall short due to legal delays, housing instability, or health emergencies. Through this fund, we provide immediate support including groceries, STM passes, and essential baby and hygiene items.

The Refugee Centre's

PAY IT FORWARD
Fund

This year alone, the Pay It Forward Fund delivered urgent relief to :

80 individuals

60% went to essential needs

10% went to critical medical emergencies and housing support



Our Projects

ALLOCANADA & DEVBLOC

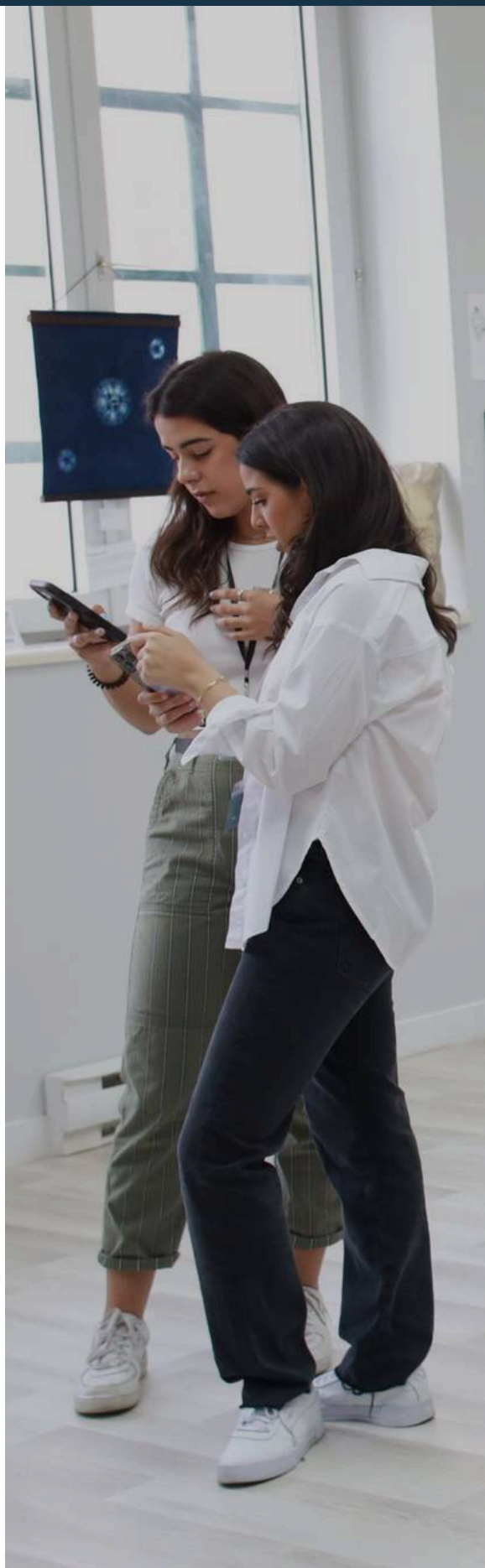
In 2018, the Centre launched DevBloc, a community-based social enterprise incubator aiming to stimulate the establishment and growth of technology-based start-up companies and other compatible businesses in relation to social enterprise and community building. Through this initiative, we've been in the process of developing AlloCanada, a centralized web application designed to accompany newcomers at every stage of their settlement journey. Using advanced filters based on migration status and type of service, AlloCanada functions as a single point of access to essential, tailored resources.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

For the past two years, the Centre, in collaboration with Resilience Montreal, has delivered a grant program supporting Indigenous and refugee youth to develop projects focused on inclusivity, reconciliation, civic engagement, and community empowerment. By removing financial barriers, the program enables youth from systematically underfunded communities to bring forward creative, community-driven initiatives.

This year,
we financed

23 projects



Our Projects



READY TOUR SESSIONS

In collaboration with Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) presenters, Kinbrace offers virtual Ready Tours workshops to help refugee claimants prepare for their hearings and understand the refugee appeal process. This is the second year in a row that The Refugee Centre has partnered with Kinbrace to deliver the Ready Tours in French.

14 Ready Tour sessions for hearings

11 Ready Tour sessions for appeals



BRIGADES PROGRAM

In July 2025, we launched our Brigades program in partnership with the Peter-McGill district to give refugees and migrants with precarious status paid opportunities to actively contribute to Montreal's community while building professional skills that support their integration into the job market. Participants offered interpretation for our beneficiaries at medical appointments, assisted the Centre with food distribution at our food bank, and supported clients in using computers during our weekly workshops.

8 refugee and migrants participated as brigades



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



thank you
thank you
thank you

This report reflects a year marked by growing challenges and increasingly urgent needs. In a political context that continues to complicate the lives of refugees and migrant communities, demand for our services has only increased. Your support makes it possible for The Refugee Centre to respond with resilience and care. On behalf of our team and the people and families we walk alongside, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who stand with us.



LE CENTRE DE RÉFUGIÉS
THE REFUGEE CENTRE