



The Toronto Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
60 Lowther Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5R 1C7

Quaker Committee for Refugees
Annual Report 2011

Introduction

Quakers believe in the equality of all people and are opposed to all forms of discrimination. One of the ways in which Friend's Peace Testimony is given witness is by service to the needs of displaced persons and refugees; this has been a concern of the Quaker Committee for Refugees for the last thirty years as it continues to be an unpopular cause that deserves full attention from our Canadian society. We continue to do what we can to relieve the unnecessary suffering caused by others who do not understand the plight of a refugee. Refugees and new immigrants often come to Canada as a result of injustices in other parts of the world, so our work helps alleviate the consequences of that injustice in their lives.

This report is a summary of the work done through the Nancy Pocock Office at the Quaker House and the Immigration Holding Centre (IHC) on Rexdale Boulevard in Etobicoke. While Friends House provides a sense of security to all those individuals who come to our door looking for assistance every day; the IHC prevents refugee claimants and people without status from having any freedom of movement. In both places the demand for our services remains high. Sometimes having someone available to listen attentively to individual stories makes a significant difference in the lives of people who are feeling isolated and depressed, for good cause.

In the course of 2011 the Direct Service Program was able to assist 307 people in the Nancy Pocock office, 737 people in detention through the Toronto Refugee Affairs Council (TRAC) and 86 people through the refugee camp.

Our program offers the following services to the community:

- General and settlement counseling
- Interpreters and escorts
- Translations
- Case assessment for referral to other programs and organizations.
- Weekly visits to people in detention.

The program fulfills requirements such as providing information, orientation, and assistance with documentation and referrals. In general, the problems that people need help with are in areas such as immigration, health care problems, citizenship, unemployment, pensions, taxes, housing, and social assistance.

Year 2011 will be remembered in the settlement sector for being the year when many agencies lost their federal funding and were left with no hope on the horizon. Newcomers are the immediate losers from these cuts since fewer accessible and effective services will be available in 2012. Now more than ever our coordination with other NGOs is needed for the provision of valuable services to refugees and new comers. We consult and work with national networks, such as the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), Anglican United Refugee Alliance (AURA), United Nations, Red Cross, Amnesty International, the Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), and many other community agencies, shelters, and legal clinics.

Immigration policies will continue to harm newcomers; new interpretation of the law will drastically reduce the number of those who are able to make a claim or sponsor family members from abroad. Regardless of changes to government policies our committee members, staff and volunteers will continue to work as effectively as possible with our partners, in an effort to maintain the programs and services to pave the way for those in need of help.

The tables below provide some statistical and demographic information about the people who have received assistance from the office at Friends House in Toronto.

Table A

Nationality of People served

Afghanistan	5
Algeria	9
Angola	3
Bolivia	7
Colombia	64
Costa Rica	19
Chile	5
China	5
Cuba	3
Czech Republic	1
Dominican Republic	8
Ecuador	11
El Salvador	9
Georgia	1
Ghana	8
Guatemala	11
Guyana	3
Grenada	7
Honduras	12
Iran	3
Iraq	5
Liberia	3
Mexico	35
Namibia	2
Nicaragua	13
Tanzania	1
Pakistan	9
Paraguay	7
Peru	7
Sierra Leone	2
Somalia	4
Sudan	5
St. Lucia	5
St. Vincent	8
Venezuela	7
Total	307

Table B

Types of Services provided to Refugees at Friends House

Application forms	143
Certification of documents	40
Food and transportation	3
Furniture bank appointments	15
Intake forms for Christmas party	50
Income taxes	15
Letters	39
Long term housing	9
Oral interpretation (lawyer's office)	45
Personal Information Form (PIF) assistance	19
Referrals	131
Resume writing	2
Short term housing (shelters)	13
Translations of documents	103
Telephone calls	1,513
Grand Total	2,140

Table C

Immigration Status of People Assisted

Convention refugees	59
Caregivers	3
Failed refugee claimants	72
Landed immigrants	81
Persons without status	13
Refugee claimants	59
Temporary residents (Students, temporary workers and visitors)	20
Total	307



Children's Christmas Party

The Quaker Committee for Refugees has been a recipient of toys and financial support from CHUM Christmas Wish since its foundation. Through this important yearly activity we have served thousands of children and their parents.

As in previous years the Quaker House in Toronto was filled with music and shouts of children at play. In the Meeting Room seven of those children decided to add to the joys of the program, by playing the piano and the guitar, and singing in a solo presentation of Christmas songs. The audience really enjoyed their singing and playing of the instruments. It was delightful and inspiring to see and hear so much talent.

For the first time Santa Claus was not able to attend, though his role was perfectly played by a group of young adults, former program recipients, who had offered to volunteer with the distribution of presents and food.

Many thanks to all the volunteers from Friends House, the Salvadoran Canadian Association and all the little artists who shared their talent to welcome those who

visited us for their first time. Our combined efforts allowed us to serve more than a hundred children and their parents, who have chosen Canada as their new home.



Refugee Summer Camp

Thanks to the ongoing support and commitment of the NeeKauNis Camp Committee 78 participants from Burundi, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Eritrea, Guatemala, Mexico, Nigeria, Namibia, Oman, Pakistan, Rwanda, Singapore and St. Lucia, got an opportunity to spend a long weekend at Camp. For many, this was their first summer in Canada and also their first experience of nature here, and of sharing life with people from other cultural backgrounds. The weather was not generous this time; it was cold and rainy for most of our stay, so we spent most of our time indoors. The positive impact of this experience provided very precious time for reflection and appreciation of the things we all value in life. It was a perfect time for all and for new participants to exchange experiences and talk a bit about their homeland and how they got to Canada. Others found that cooking, playing sports and making new friends was also a very enriching experience.

We want to commend the Salvadoran Canadian Association and FutureWatch who assisted in preparing, organizing and the running of the camp. Their dedication and commitment to this special yearly event is much appreciated.



Detention Report

IMMIGRATION HOLDING CENTRE

Life in the Toronto Immigration Holding Centre (IHC) for the last year has been characterized by new construction. It was started in April 2011, and has passed two deadlines already with some assurances that the work will be finished some time in 2012. The additional bedrooms are finished and being occupied. The IHC is just one of several detention centres and hearing rooms that are also being built to hold and process refugee claimants and those awaiting removal from Canada.

People who are considered a flight risk are being detained when they get a decision on their Pre-Removal Risk Assessment Application (PRRA). PRRA is supposed to take place when the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) considers the person "removal ready". This in turn reflects the higher number of detainees at the IHC in Toronto, where more than a 100 detainees were kept in the building at any given time for most of second half of 2011. Few people make claims once they have been detained. As members of civil society we are there to assist anyone who comes to our office, regardless of country of origin and immigration status. We serve both new arrivals and those who have overstayed their status in the country. In either case, our priority is to provide orientation, to make sure they understand why they are detained, help them with forms, and refer them to Legal Aid, shelters and other services available to them.

In general CBSA staff members are very cooperative and always available to provide assistance or share information. This cooperation is the result of the outstanding role played by a Quaker Friend, Fred Franklin in the last twenty five years. We are fortunate to continue having a presence at IHC, which despite their restrictions, still enables us to serve those who suffer in detention.

These days fewer children are being held in detention with their mothers (or the occasional father); those children who have no status are allowed to leave the building with parental authorization if a judge allows them to do so, and if there is someone in the community to look after them. This allows them to go to school and not to suffer the trauma of being held in detention. However, there is a downside to this: children cannot return to their parents until the family is released or sent back. Most of them are sent back to their country of origin.

The number of people served at the immigration holding centre in 2011 by the staff at the TRAC office reflects only a small portion of the people detained. These numbers and their nationalities always seem to fluctuate although they are given here to provide an idea of the nationalities of the population of detainees.

Table D.
People Served at the Holding Centre

Afghanistan	12	Iraq	12
Albania	1	Israel	16
Algeria	15	Italy	2
Angola	7	Jamaica	29
Antigua	3	Jordan	3
Argentina	3	Kenya	6
Belgium	2	Latvia	1
Bolivia	7	Laos	1
Botswana	2	Lebanon	8
Brazil	11	Liberia	4
Cameroon	10	Malaysia	3
China	31	Mali	1
Chile	4	Mexico	99
Colombia	8	Mongolia	1
Congo	2	Namibia	6
Costa Rica	6	Netherlands	5
Cuba	5	Nicaragua	11
Czech Republic	3	Nigeria	44
Dominica	5	Pakistan	18
Dominican Republic	5	Peru	7
Ecuador	11	Philippines	8
El Salvador	6	Poland	2
Egypt	11	Portugal	8
Eritrea	6	Russia	5
Ethiopia	8	Rwanda	9
Germany	5	Sierra Leone	11
Ghana	9	Somalia	9
Grenada	4	Sri Lanka	4
Guatemala	11	Sudan	5
Guinea-Bissau	2	Spain	7
		St. Lucia	45

Turkey	1
Uruguay	7
Venezuela	3
Viet Nam	3
Total	739

Table E
Number of people by immigrant status

Live-in caregivers *	2
Failed Refused claimants	358
Safe Third Country detained (Not eligible to make a claim in Canada)	11
Sponsorship breakdowns	11
Overstayed farm workers	8
Overstayed student visas	9
Overstayed visitors	62
Visitors (held on suspicion)	119
Withdrawal of Claim	9
Refugee claimants	150
Total	739

Guyana	11	St. Vincent	37
Haiti	2	Syria	8
Honduras	5	Taiwan	2
Hungary	8	Thailand	7
India	22	Tunisia	1
Iran	15	Trinidad	2

*Individuals who are qualified to provide care for children, elderly persons or persons with disabilities in private homes without supervision.

Members of the Committee during 2011.

Brydon Gombay (Clerk)
 Frank Showler
 Fred Franklin
 Judy Pocock
 Sarah Hall
 Eusebio Garcia (Refugee and Settlement Worker)

Thank you

The Quaker Committee for Refugees remains true to our mandate to continue serving the needs of the refugees and new immigrants so they can integrate and participate in Canadian society. Our capacity to assist the number of people mentioned at the beginning of this report would not have been possible without the assistance and support of many individuals and the following organizations:

The Toronto Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
 Samuel Rogers Memorial Trust
 Canadian Friends Service Committee
 The Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
 Halifax Monthly Meeting
 The Donald Berman Foundation
 Rob Adamson Memorial Trust
 CHUM Charitable Foundation
 Camp Nee-kau-nis Committee of CYM
 Nancy's Very Own Foundation
 Argenta Monthly Meeting
 Kitchener Monthly Meeting
 Individual Donors

In 2011 the expenses of the QCR were slightly over \$ 51,000.00. All of this money was received from the donors named above, and was administered by the Treasurer of Toronto Monthly Meeting (TMM). All donations to the QCR are spent on the work of the committee, which is required to raise these funds to pay for all its expenses. As a concern of the TMM (Quakers), the Refugee Committee is a federally approved charitable organization (#11926-6955-RR0001). We

welcome any donations, which can be addressed to: Toronto Monthly Meeting, 60 Lowther Avenue, Toronto, ON M5R 1C7, with Quaker Committee for Refugees on the memo line.

A new initiative this year has taken us back to our roots, through jewellery designed by Nancy Pocock, whose work on such designs was gradually taken over by the work for refugees which came to absorb her life. Her daughter Judy, a member of our committee, has found some of her mother's designs of provincial floral emblems, and one of a maple leaf, and has arranged to have them made up as silver pendants or a maple leaf pin, to be sold to benefit the work of our committee. Anyone wishing to know more about Nancy's Jewellery Project can reach her by email: judy.pocock@utoronto.ca.

Our services to refugees are all provided free of charge. With only one paid staff member, volunteers on the QCR as well as other members of the TMM do the rest of our work. We are grateful to Toronto Monthly Meeting for the welcoming space it so generously provides for that work, to the Resident Friends, Judy Gilbert and Ben Bootsma, who facilitate that welcome, and to all the donors and funding foundations who make our work possible. We just couldn't do it all without you!