



NEW
CANADIANS
CENTRE
PETERBOROUGH

Gratitude Report 2019

“Giving back to the New Canadians Centre is my way to say thanks for your beautiful welcome to this fantastic country.”

My name is Fabiola from Mexico,
Thanks to the New Canadians Centres I have had many
amazing experiences in Canada.

I met incredible people in the English Conversation
Groups where I learned not just English but also
about Canada and its people.

Because of the New Canadians Centre I have visited a lot
of Canadian places that become experiences, people,
weather, history, knowledge...

Because of the New Canadians Centre I have discovered new
hidden skills in me, cooking, crochet, sewing, that I'm still
enjoying.

In addition, the extraordinary Women's Group, where women
newcomer's fears vanish. I have been meeting interesting people
with stunning stories since my first day in the group,

uncountable tips, advice, and of course friendships.
Especially I'm thankful to the NCC for giving me the huge
opportunity to be a facilitator in the Women's Group, where
I can contribute to women.

Giving back to the New Canadians Centre is my way to say
thanks for your beautiful welcome and big smile to this
fantastic country. Thank you for helping me build my
foundations, be stronger in my future and do much more
for other newcomers, for Canada.

Fabiola Contreras C.

Fabiola and her
two-year-old son Sebastien



Years of Inspiring & Encouraging Newcomers

#WeBelong

**40 years of inspiring, encouraging and creating
a sense of belonging for newcomers**

Volunteers Help Newcomers Experience Sense of Belonging through Martial Arts



Helping newcomer youth reach their full potential – from left to right are Al Prodonick, Alaa Eshhadeh, Bayan Eshhadeh, and Marcelo König Sarkis

When he was 13 years old, Marcelo König Sarkis remembers seeing a group of young people in Taekwondo uniforms running through the neighborhood where he grew up in Leamington, ON. “I thought to myself, this is something I want to be a part of,” says Marcelo. “I ran after them and enrolled in the program that day.”

“We want to help newcomer youth face their fears, and develop a sense of belonging”

That was in the late 70s. In addition to being a member of the Board of the New Canadians Centre, Marcelo is a volunteer instructor at Blue Wave Taekwondo in Peterborough, a not for profit organization that specializes in Taekwondo. Marcelo says he enjoys helping young people discover the self-confidence, discipline, and sense of belonging he experienced through martial arts so many years ago.

Two of Marcelo’s students are newcomers Bayan Eshhadeh and Alaa Eshhadeh. Both Grade 5

students (Bayan at Highland Heights and Alaa at Keith Wightman) in Peterborough, the girls who are originally from Syria have been in Canada for just three and a half years. Dedicated, committed and competitive, Bayan and Alaa recently captured first, second and two third places at the World Master Taekwondo games. “I feel good when I’m competing,” says Bayan. “I feel strong.” Alaa agrees. “It’s really fun to be a part of the club. They are like my family.”

Bayan and Alaa were introduced to Taekwondo through a partnership between Blue Wave Taekwondo and the New Canadians Centre that offered one month of free introductory classes. Since then, Blue Wave Taekwondo has become a partner of the New Canadians Centre’s Peterborough Welcome Pass Program designed to help newcomers connect with the local community.

In addition to their recent competitive success, Bayan and Alaa have participated in Breaking Through Barriers, an event that focuses on breaking through the things that make kids feel anxious, afraid, and alone. “We help youth to face their fears, build their strength and develop a sense of belonging. Taekwondo is a universal sport that welcomes people from all around the world,” Marcelo explains. “As are its teachings of discipline, physical fitness

and that everyone deserves to be welcomed, everyone belongs.”



Newcomers Alaa Eshhadeh (l) and Bayan Eshhadeh say that being a part of the Taekwondo club is like being part of a family

Generous grant of \$13,000 from the RBC Foundation Provides Focused, Additional Support for Newcomer Youth

“During the past three years we’ve experienced tremendous growth in the number of newcomer youth attending programs and in need of services,” explains Jessica Devlin, Settlement Worker in Schools (SWIS) Coordinator. “We had 67 newcomer youth attend an after school activity at Lakeview Bowl. For some of these kids they have just arrived and this is their first introduction to youth in their community. At the same time, the challenges our newcomer youth face are more complex, the barriers to language, culture and a sense of belonging in the community are often tougher to penetrate

requiring more focused, one on one support. This generous grant from the RBC Foundation will help to provide the additional resources required to develop and enhance the programs and services we deliver to support our newcomer youth in the best way possible.”



More than 67 newcomer youth attended the After School Program which took place at Lakeview Bowl in Peterborough. Some of the youth are from newly-arrived families. This was their first interaction with other newcomer youth who share their experience of having to leave their home as a result of war.

Friendship of Aya and Jessy Demonstrates the Power of Welcoming Diversity

Aya Darrouba remembers the first time she went tobogganing with her best friend Jessy Seward. "We crashed," Aya exclaims. "It was so much fun. Don't worry, no one was hurt."

Best friends since the seventh grade, Aya, who is blind since birth says she is never afraid to try new things with Jessy. In addition to the sledding expedition Jessy and Aya have gone rock climbing, volunteered together at the New Canadians Centre's Multicultural Canada Day Festival, Peterborough Pulse and the Salvation Army. They even teamed up to help get a light installed to ensure safe crossing from their school at Highland and Fairbairn Streets. "When Aya first came to my house my parents were worried she wouldn't be able to go up and down the stairs," Jessy laughs.

Since they became best friends the two girls say they have learned a great deal from one another. "Aya has taught me how to read Braille and Arabic,"

Jessy says. "I'm more aware of the challenges people face because of Aya."

"Jessy has taught me to be more adventurous," says Aya. "She is the first friend who is the same age I am, who is not blind."

"Aya is the sister I never had," says Jessy.



Aya (l) and Jessy welcome diversity in their friendship

When a door opens for Khidir Bkdach, he jumps through it. Because of you, he knows he belongs here

Khidir Bkdach is familiar with the delicious smell of warm oatmeal and maple syrup coming from the Quaker plant (PepsiCo Foods Canada Quaker Peterborough Plant) when he walks across the Hunter Street Bridge. "I live in East City," says 24-year-old Khidir. "I walk across the bridge to get to my home." During this past summer, the plant was 'home' to Khidir's employer, PepsiCo Foods. "I worked in the finance department," says the second year Fleming College student. "I'm studying Business Administration. I want to be an accountant when I'm finished school."

"It was a short-term employment opportunity that needed to be filled right away," says Michael Valliant-Saunders, Customer Value Chain Manager, PepsiCo Foods Canada. In addition to the employment connection, Michael is a member of a volunteer support team that helped welcome Khidir and his family when they

"Now I know I belong here. I'm a Canadian."

arrived from Homs three years ago. Both Michael and his partner, Gayle, are part of Team Bienvenue. "I've had the chance to get to know Khidir and watched him embrace the opportunities presented to him," Michael says. "I needed someone who possesses a strong work ethic and is committed to following through for this particular job. Khidir's volunteer and work experience at the



Michael Valliant-Saunders, Customer Value Chain Manager, PepsiCo Foods (l) and Khidir Bkdach have known each other since Khidir arrived in Peterborough three years ago.

New Canadians Centre led me to believe he would jump in and give it his all. And he did."

Still in high school when the war broke out in Syria, Khidir continued his education at home, on his own. First a client of the NCC, volunteer and in 2018 a member of the staff, Khidir has worked extremely hard to learn English and to integrate into a community that's welcomed him. "Khidir is keen to explore Canada and to embrace new experiences and cultures," Michael says. "He's immersed himself in his new life, developed skills and his ability to speak English. If I put myself in Khidir's shoes, I don't know if I would have done as well as he has. I admire his determination."

For Khidir, his journey from a refugee camp in Turkey has been a long one, and not without its struggles. "Sometimes it's really overwhelming. But now I know I belong here. I'm a Canadian."



Cosmas Ballantyne (l) is one of the many newcomers Linda Briden helps discover the personal growth, connection to community that arises through language development

Volunteer Tutor Linda Briden Continues a Lifelong Commitment to Helping Newcomers Learn English

There's nothing that brings Linda Briden more joy than witnessing an extraordinary 'a ha' moment with one of her students. Or the happiness she feels when they suddenly read a sentence all on their own. "I'm constantly inspired by my students and their immense determination to succeed in their new life in Canada."

Like many tutors who volunteer their time at the New Canadians Centre to help newcomers develop language skills, Linda is a retired elementary school teacher who spent the majority of her career in multicultural classrooms in Toronto. "Helping newcomers learn English is something I've always loved to do. Volunteering as a tutor at the New Canadians Centre fills that void."

Passionate about teaching, especially newcomers to Canada, Linda applies her own carefully crafted, individualized curriculum to her tutoring sessions.

She has even self-published a fictional story told from the point of view of a newcomer child entitled, "Know Me".

A friendly and welcome face at the New Canadians Centre, we are very grateful to tutors like Linda for their commitment and dedication supporting language development, and helping newcomers connect to their community to create a sense of belonging. Thank you Linda!

Invested in his on-going Development, Khalid's Employer is Teaching him English while he Works

From the time he arrived in Peterborough with his family Khalid Alhariri was eager to find employment. "I wanted to give back and help the country that welcomed us," says 42-year-old Khalid.

"When he was living in Syria, Khalid worked on a farm raising poultry and cattle," says Mahdi Bubteina, Case Management Worker with the New Canadians Centre's Refugee Assistance Program. When the war broke out, Khalid and his family fled to Jordan where they lived for six years.

Today, Khalid is employed at a farm in Bailieboro where he works five days a week from 8 am to 5 pm.

"It's so important for newcomers to use the skills they've developed to secure employment here in this community, while they continue to learn and develop their language skills," explains Mahdi. Khalid's employer at the farm in Bailieboro is so invested in helping him learn English, he refuses to rely on Google translate to communicate with him. "He told me, I'm going to teach you the words. I want you to learn while you are working here," Khalid says with a smile. "I feel very encouraged by the NCC, my employer and my support team." Julie Dotsch, a long-time volunteer and member of Khalid's volunteer support team, Kouri's Crew, tutors Khalid for two hours every week.

"Khalid is working hard to build a new life in Canada," says Mahdi. Khalid says as each day passes he feels more and more like he and his family belong here. "He's very optimistic about his family's future."



Mahdi Bubteina (l) says it's important for newcomers like Khalid to use the skills they've developed to secure employment in Canada

Because of You, the New Canadians Centre has been inspiring, encouraging and helping newcomers feel like they belong for more than 40 years.



221 Romaine Street Peterborough, ON K9J 2C3
www.nccpeterborough.ca

For more information on how you can help contact,
 Carol Lawless, Fund Development Coordinator
carol@nccpeterborough.ca | 705-743-0882 x 230