


Our Love Letter to You

Gratitude Report 2022



When we think about 2019, our first year in Canada, the one word that comes to mind is gratitude. The NCC has always been very welcoming, and their staff is kind and always willing to help, even if we were not fluent in English. They taught us about Canadian culture and traditions, helped us with our English and introduced us to different accents, and we even taught some Spanish lessons where we made our first Canadian friends. They've helped us feel part of a community and made the transition to Canada easier.

Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, we continued to connect online and participated in many workshops. We are grateful for all of these experiences, and the people we've met, and look forward to continuing to enjoy all the activities the NCC offers.

Rafael & Aruasy

Volunteer Jeff Ji Pays Forward the Kindness He Once Received

Volunteers come to the New Canadians Centre through many different paths. Some come from families who themselves received help from NCC in the past.

Jeff Ji's family immigrated from China and moved to Peterborough when he was a child. The NCC and volunteers helped his parents in developing employment skills, editing resumes, and providing them with English language tutoring.

Jeff witnessed the good that volunteers can do and that inspired him to get involved, and **"pay back some of the kindness (my family) received and pass it on to a new immigrant family."**

In August of 2019, Jeff started volunteering with NCC as a Refugee Support Team Leader. Support teams act as a support network of

friends, helping refugees adjust to their new life in Canada and overcome cultural barriers and other challenges that surface when navigating a new place.

As a team leader with NCC, Jeff helped organize a team of volunteers tasked with finding housing for a family, showing them around town, helping with English lessons, socializing, supporting their needs for healthcare appointments, arranging fun family activities, and generally easing their transition to life in Peterborough.

Jeff and the members of his support team – Team Betterment Brigade – were awarded a Community Betterment Award in January 2022 by the City of Peterborough in recognition of their volunteer efforts in helping new Canadians settle.

Jeff is glad that he was able to be "there in crucial moments of a family who did need help. I was really happy that we were able to do things for the family like help them find their first home, or at least a place to stay, help them buy their first car, and also see their family be more integrated into Peterborough."

Jeff is one of over 160 volunteers who support the work of the New Canadians Centre each year. The Volunteer Program at the New Canadians Centre provides several opportunities to connect with the Peterborough community, learn about new cultures, make a difference in someone's life, and build new skills. We could not operate or reach our goals without the generous help of our volunteers.



Jeff Ji (right) is volunteering as a Team Leader of the Betterment Brigade Support Team supporting a new family in navigating their new lives in Peterborough. Jeff was drawn to volunteer and "pay back some of the kindness (my family) received and pass it on to a new immigrant family."

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From No English to Business Owner – Mohammad Wahbi's Story

Perseverance and community come together to create the perfect recipe for success for Mohammad Wahbi and his family.



With over 25 years of experience as an upholsterer, Mohammad Wahbi found employment at Cobourg Canvas and Upholstering. Today, he is the proud owner of the company.

Mohammad has worked in upholstery since 1995 and ran his own business in his native Syria and then in Lebanon. In 2016, Mohammad and his family were sponsored to come to Canada with the support of several community members who formed a private sponsorship group.

He remembers arriving after the long and difficult journey to a blanket of snow on the ground and not being able to speak in English. The family was quickly connected to the New Canadians Centre, where they benefited from several programs that supported their initial settlement, school registration and orientations for the children, and English language learning. Today, the family calls Cobourg their home.

With his many years of experience in upholstery, Mohammad found employment at the Cobourg Canvas and Upholstering, where he proved to be a valued employee. When the original owner of the business was ready to retire, Mohammad seized the opportunity to become a business owner again. He bought the business and takes pride in satisfying his customers every day.

Mohammad's success is the combination of his commitment and hard work and the power that welcome, inclusion, and opportunity hold.

Productive new Canadians, the family is now on the path to becoming Canadian Citizens and has benefited from the support of the NCC's Settlement Counsellors with the application process, paperwork, and preparation. We wish Mohammad and his family the best and cheer them on.



Mohammad Wahbi, his wife, and three children were sponsored to come to Canada. The couple had a fourth child, a son born in Canada.

“It is ok if we don’t succeed on the first attempt”

by Anna Albouni

It is so nice to celebrate another year of success for the New Canadians Centre.

My name is Anna Albouni Kalisli and I’m a wife, mother of two boys, and Syrian journalist, and live with my family in Cobourg enjoying Lake Ontario. My family and I arrived in Canada in 2016 and became Canadian citizens just a few months ago and that is a big achievement in our life. Our journey in Canada has been about 6 years now, and like any newcomer, here were ups and downs from learning the language to building a business and making friends.

The first and big challenge was when my husband decided after a few months from our arrival to build his own business (Zaan Renovation). It is risky to have a new business be the only resource for the family income, and even be more challenging for newcomers to build a connection and find people who trust newcomers’ skills. Between the support that we received from our sponsor and my husband’s skills, we made the business grow and be trusted. I can say it is now a thriving business.

While talking about our journey in Canada, I can’t forget all the support that we received from the New Canadians Centre staff. Who knew moving to a new country would become a big challenge for newcomers?

The help NCC provided to my family started from the very beginning of our journey here and did not stop until today. I remember the first meeting with them was to help us to understand the education system in the country, which allowed us to choose the right school for our kids. They did not hesitate to introduce us to the community, and give us advice. We enjoy the entertainment activities that they organize, the workshops that empower us as newcomers in different ways, and much more. I want to say to all of the staff: thank you so much we appreciate your help and support, and I’m so proud to be part of your volunteer team.

In the end, I want to say a few things to the newcomers who are going through the same experience.

I know life is not easy for us and pushed us to leave our homes and beloved ones to move to another country looking for peace, a safe place, and a better future.



I know it is not easy to be in a new country speaking a different language than we used to, adopt a new system, understand the culture, build a career, and find a job.

I want to tell you what I’m telling myself when I feel homesick or weak: we are strong.

We can build our life from scratch, learn a new language and be fluent. We have good skills so we can be active and beneficial members of the community. Nothing can stop us from working for our kids’ futures.

It is ok if we don’t succeed on the first attempt. It is ok if we change our careers. It is ok if we have an accent.

Don’t go hard on yourself. Remember we are lucky that we have the chance to come to Canada, the country of opportunity and be surrounded by this welcoming and warm community and people



Anna shared this speech when she was recognised as NCC’s Volunteer of the Year – Northumberland 2022 (left, with staff Boutheina Maraoui). We are so proud to share her inspiring words with you!

Thank you: From a Refugee Camp to Trent University

By Nhial Wal Abraham

Everyone wishes that life could forever be as beautiful as our happiest moments. I remember my early years as a boy in the small village of Fangak, located in the state of Jonglei, South Sudan. I barely knew anything about the world beyond my town. This all changed when my family moved to Uganda in 2006 to pursue school. I lived there for most of my life and it pretty much became my home.

When the civil war took place in 2013, things took a hard turn. Nevertheless, there is always hope in times of despair, and hardships in life should not draw us to surrender. We ought to direct our focus on the things that give us extra strength to live another day.



Back in 2009 before the civil war happened in South Sudan (Nhial, centre)

After completing High School, I taught as a grade 4 and 5 Mathematics and English teacher. I was always very timid by nature but this experience was something that pulled me out of my comfort zone especially working with the kids. This also played a role in boosting my confidence and communication skills.

Later on, in 2019, I obtained sponsorship from the World University Service for Canada to pursue further studies at Trent University. This was the happiest moment of my life given the situation that I was living in as a refugee and the program is very competitive.

When I arrived in Peterborough in 2021, it was a whole new chapter in my life. I found it hard to adapt to the winter since it was a new experience, and the education system was different from the British system that I was used to. The New Canadians Centre was one of the places that helped with the resources that I needed to catalyze settlement in Peterborough.

Fast forward, I'm now happily settled in Peterborough and trying to make an impact in the community through working at the New Canadians Centre.

Working with the New Canadians Centre is helping me improve in important aspects of my life for example my writing and

communication skills plus the transferable work experience that I could need in my future career.

The New Canadians Centre staff has been a powerful pivot to who I am today in Peterborough. I would love to thank everyone at New Canadians Centre for all the support that I received. Please know that your tireless efforts are never in vain.

I hope to leave a footprint as I serve newcomers who share the same experiences as I. We are in this together!



My first winter experience in Canada, 2021.

Nhial Wal Abraham joined #TeamNCC as the Fund Development Assistant this summer. Before that, he was a member of the Newcomer Leadership Group, a 6-week leadership training program that supports newcomers in developing their capacity and confidence to engage in the community.

Discovering the Stories within Us

This spring, we embarked on the Storytelling Circle, a six-week program developed in partnership with Theatre for Good to provide a space for newcomers to connect with others, learn new skills, and share their stories with the community.

One participant shared, "Coming here each week and telling stories is my healing time."

Facilitated by Megan Nimigon of Theatre for Good, the program drew on a mix of interactive and theatre-based exercises to help spark ideas, reflection, and creativity.

Each participant filmed videos sharing a personal story with other members of the cohort helping to animate the stories through dramatisation and free movement.

Learn more about each of the participants below, and watch their video stories on our website at: www.nccpeterborough.ca/storytellingcircle



Fidan Cakir-Senil and her partner journey to Canada to build a promising life and future for their son.

Grace Terfa still remembers the flight to Canada – 17 hours long while she was 9 months pregnant and flying with a toddler.

Celis Garcia encourages everyone to take hold of every opportunity that comes their way.

Bhisham Ramoutar takes us on a journey through the three countries he has lived in and how he has redefined concepts of home and belonging along the way.

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



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For more information on how you can help, contact **Paris Nguyen, Fund Development Officer**
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How you can welcome immigrants and refugees who are new to Peterborough and Northumberland

How did your family build a home in Canada?

What would you like to tell immigrants and refugees who are new to our community and facing the prospect of starting from the ground up?

We would love to hear from you and to share these stories and advice with families to inspire and encourage them.

Your encouragement will make a world of difference to someone who feels alone.

In the last 40+ years, we have counted on you to shape our community to welcome new immigrants and refugees to Peterborough and Northumberland.

Thanks to your generous support, you've helped newcomers establish and maintain long-time friendships and important connections that inspires language learning and a sense of belonging.

Watch for our December 2022 update on how your contribution has made a big difference to Ukrainians who are fleeing from crisis and are welcomed in Peterborough.

Send us a letter in the mail or email your story to any member of our Philanthropy Team (Andy, Yvonne or Paris). You can also call us at 705 743 0882 and we can follow up with you.



Review our **2020-2021 AGM report** to see how your support meant the world to us in a time of great need