

cross cultural CURRENT

fostering a more just community, globally and locally...

London Cross Cultural Learner Centre

cc|c

The Re-birth of Arabic Theatre

Often, the difference between a good idea and a great idea is the person behind it. Sometimes those ideas are free-flowing, but at other times they can be years in the making. For one Iraqi woman, a great idea could be a lifetime in the making.

Khawla Shaker came to London, Ontario in 2009. Now, with the support of the Cross Cultural Learner Centre, Khawla is making an idea a reality. Along with a team of other community members, Khawla is setting the stage, creating a play about the reality of coming from Iraq. When we asked her about how she got this idea, Khawla takes a deep breath and said (through an interpreter) "since I left Iraq, it was an obsession inside me to be an ambassador for my country and for all Arabs." She continues to describe a long journey that took her through Syria, through failed attempts to express the anguish and trauma of witnessing her home torn apart.



A renown playwright, Khawla graduated from the Egyptian High Commission of Theatre in 1991 with a Masters Degree in Playwriting, Analysis and Directing. With over 30 years of experience all over the Middle East, she has directed 32 different theatre pieces, including but not limited to B'ka el Hajer (the Crying Stone), El Beit el Mansay (the Forgotten Home), Ealan Halet Hob (Declaration of the Love Case) and Ala Rai el Masal (the Opinion of Cultural Proverbs).

She described how after arriving at Joseph's House, she couldn't sleep, being kept up all night by the contradiction of her emotions and her future ambitions. Shortly after leaving CCLC's residence, she began to find people in her English classes that could see her vision, people that had similar experiences to her own. She credits CCLC with empowering her, and giving her space and support to make her dream a reality.

Of course, there is so much more to her story. It's one of passion, that reminds us that we are all made up of our past, present and future. Khawla is now working alongside her group to build a piece of theatre that is representative of all of that.

IN THIS ISSUE what's going on



What does it mean to be a refugee in Canada? Take a closer look through the eyes of the RAP Program Staff.
PAGE 2



This issue explores: 5 ways to get more information.
PAGE 3



See how CCLC is using alternative approaches to address health among refugees in London.
PAGE 3, 4



Creative Programming: HOST Program's Social and Professional Networking Club
PAGE 4

CCLC provides you with all your translation requirements using official and certified translators. Documents are translated accurately and in a timely fashion. We have over 60 languages and our services cover all documents, such as Immigration documents, Driver's Licenses and Records, Marriage and Birth Certificates, Education documents, etc., for both professionals and students. Come visit us on the second floor at 505 Dundas Street.

Helping Refugees Resettle in London Ontario

When Resettlement is the Question, the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) is the Answer

Whether staying at Jeremiah's House Reception Centre, getting Orientation at CCLC, or a little extra help from Life Skills Workers, refugees in London quickly learn that home is where the heart is.

Majida Shahatto describes her work as a RAP Settlement Worker:

I have been working on the RAP team for one year now, and I have been privileged to discover the importance and value of our services, the basis of a new life for clients who arrive here to an unknown and mysterious future. The RAP program ensures that every Government-Assisted Refugee receives Orientation on all aspects of life in Canada. As part of our duties we process the newcomers Permanent Resident Card, SIN Card, OHIP, CTB and GST application, CIC Cheques, housing, and medical needs while they reside at Jeremiah's House, the onsite Reception Centre.

It's a delight to see the smile and comfort on our clients' faces when they visit our office after they move out to their permanent homes. I once had a client who was very nervous and stressed out, arriving in a new place, sick, scared, with no English language, no relatives, no

friends and understandably extremely grumpy. So I thought to myself, this is a challenge and I need to work on helping him to adapt to his new life with a more optimistic outlook.

Although I am not a psychologist, I too was an immigrant once, from a different country, different culture and different language. I know how it feels to be a stranger in a new place. I am not just a settlement worker, I am a human being who could help him make a change.

What did I do? I connected him with a couple of other clients who also needed a friend. They shared the same concerns, apartment, and school. With time they began practicing English together, cooked together, and even shared the same silly jokes.

For me, the best part of my job is when these clients return to the centre, he always comes by my office "because it brings me pleasant memories."

REFUGEES: EVERYDAY NORMAL PEOPLE

The difference is in how they come to call London home.

Refugees come from different places, for many different reasons. One thing they have in common is that they are all resilient survivors, who are looking to make London home.

According to the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act, established by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in 2002, a refugee is someone who seeks protection from the state of Canada and who has a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."

There are three types of refugees:

Government-assisted refugee – seeks protection in home country or 'safe third country' and is pre-approved for status.

Sponsored refugee – usually by church, organization or group of five, this person would apply outside Canada and be pre-approved.

Refugee claimant – arrives at a port-of-entry from their home country or a 'safe third country' and claims need for protection upon arrival.



Partners in Caring staff Jennifer Williamson and Sherin Hussein, with Arabic interpreter Perihan and her daughter at the London Muslim Mosque's Annual Bazaar.

Partners in Caring would like to thank the London Muslim Mosque for their generous donations over the last year. Members of the mosque have organized clothing and toy drives, have donated their Zakaat (donations made after their religious Eid celebrations) to families in need, and gave tickets for free food to all Government-Assisted Refugee families celebrating Eid at the Annual Bazaar.

Welcome to the World, Right Here in London

RAP Housing Coordinator, Jerusalem Berhane

Being part of the RAP team is like being part of different cultures from different parts of the world. Yet one story in particular stands out however.

As housing coordinator, I take clients to see apartments, once they've completed their orientation. On this specific day, I took a Karen family from Burma to see a place that I thought was a perfect fit. Before leaving, as is usual, I explained through an interpreter what we were going to do, and I could see the excitement on the family's faces when they learned that this was the beginning of their independence. After making sure we had all the right documentation, hoping to start the application process to move into this beautiful space before the end of the week.

Well to my surprise as soon as we got into the lobby of the building, the mother refused to go any further. Not being able to speak Karen, I looked around to see if there was something wrong, but no! After returning to the centre, through the interpreter, I learned that it was the building itself that had scared her. The family had spent their whole lives living in a small house in an open field, and the scariest thing about coming to Canada for her was being asked to live in a high rise apartment building.

Since then, I have learned that taking the time to talk to clients about the homes they used to live in just as important as finding a great home here. For many of these families, the journey is just as important as the end result, and their life histories serve as an important reminder of the richness of their experience.

To find out more please contact
Cross Cultural Learner Centre at **(519) 432-1133**
or visit our website at **www.lcclc.org**



Medical Students from the Schulich School of Medicine and the University of Western Ontario provide training on Sexual Health to a team of CCLC interpreters, who in turn give insight on cultural competent techniques for addressing reproductive and sexual health among their own communities.

A Community Response to Refugee Health and Well-being Relying on Collaboration to Promote Health

Partners in Caring is a community support service offered through the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in partnership with the YMCA of Toronto. This initiative is advised by a group of community representatives called the Political and War Trauma Advisory Board, who works to provide recommendations and advocacy on behalf of high-needs refugees. The goal of this project is to establish and maintain a support system for government-assisted refugees (GARs) upon their arrival in London, Ontario.

As a community based response to refugee health and well-being, Partners in Caring aims to create an easily accessible and highly sensitive support system for GARs, in order to address their medical, emotional, social and spiritual needs during their first year in Canada. Together the refugee trauma team provides medical and emotional support, youth-oriented services and community education to a diverse client base, assisting each individual to attain improved health, and most importantly, sustainable health over the rest of their lives.

Throughout their time with Partners in Caring, clients are offered a variety of services, with particular emphasis

on promoting health and wellness, as well as preventing disease and illness. Other services include, but are not limited to: conducting medical examinations; referrals to community agencies and local health care providers; education for refugees through workshops covering a wide variety of relevant health issues; emotional and psychological support; and community education on refugee health issues. By focusing on and working with the London community, Partners in Caring strive to provide comprehensive care to a vulnerable population very much in need.



Partners in Caring would like to extend a special thank you to Dr. Bhooma Bhayana and the medical students from the Schulich School of Medicine at the University of Western Ontario for their continued volunteering in the Medical Clinic at the centre where they perform detailed medical health histories with high needs GARs. Thank you!



5 ways to get more information

CCLC Website

Re-launched in November 2009, the CCLC's website includes detailed information on the many different services offered at the centre, as well as links to useful resources.

www.lcclc.org

Immigration Portal

Designed using feedback from newcomers, the site is updated regularly with current information.

www.welcome.london.ca

www.welcome.middlesexcounty.ca

Welcome to Ontario

Settlement.org helps newcomers find services, including information on Immigration & Citizenship, Housing, Health, Employment, Education, Community & Recreation, Legal Services and Daily Life in Ontario.

www.settlement.org

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Created in 1994, CIC is the federal government's website which provides information to link immigration services with citizenship registration, to promote the unique ideals all Canadian share and help build a stronger Canada.

www.cic.gc.ca

Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration

Created by the provincial government, this website helps with information on successful economic and social integration of newcomers, thereby maximizing the benefits of immigration.

www.citizenship.gov.on.ca

LET'S TALK: CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND CORPORATE SPACES

Over 50 people attended the Social and Professional Networking Club's seminar on December 12, 2009. Valerian Marochko, the CCLC's Executive Director, introduced the event which featured a variety of presenters who spoke on the theme of "Cultural Differences and Corporate Spaces".

Speakers included Melissa Madger, a highly sought-after Cross-Cultural Training Consultant from Toronto who was generous enough to waive her speaking fee for the event. Followed by Brian Matthews, an independent Diversity Trainer.

Their presentations contained many essential tips for newcomers including an overview of employee rights and responsibilities.

Former newcomers Magda Bergholz, Daniel Castillo and Jorge Herrera each spoke of their own path to achieving job success in Canada. Mr. Herrera advised the audience that their success is directly related to their own initiative: "the train is coming, get on the train. Maybe another train will come, but probably not. The train is there; it is full of possibilities. You are the engine,

not anyone else. Turn on the engine, follow your dream...never ever forget this."

The final portion of the seminar was when audience members were invited to speak about their own experiences in searching for employment in Canada. Many newcomers bravely chose to stand before the audience to share their touching and sometimes humorous stories of struggle as they adapted to Canadian life and work.

All of the seminar's speakers

stressed the importance of having good English skills, a well-defined goal and plenty of perseverance in order to achieve success in finding employment.

The Social and Professional Networking Club's members spent many long hours preparing for the seminar and their hard work clearly paid off. The event was so successful that the Club, is ready to work in conjunction with the Social Networking Developer and other staff of Host Program, on another seminar planned for March 2010.



Speaker Jorge Herrera at the HOST Program's Social and Professional Networking Club Event

Partners in Caring: Making London History

Speaking about HIV/AIDS and Immigration at the South Western Ontario Opening Doors Conference

Open to people living with HIV/AIDS, their families, medical service providers and students, the South Western Ontario Opening Doors Conference has been bringing the community together for education and greater understanding of HIV/AIDS in the region.

After 14 years of this initiative, the subject of HIV/AIDS and immigration to Canada, despite the many myths and stigma that surround the subject, was presented for the first time by Community Educator, Monica Abdelkader. The event was a success.

Alternative Approaches to Emotional Health for Refugees in London

Derek Oss, Emotional Health Worker, Partners in Caring

It is now widely accepted that Western notions of subjectivity are neither eternal nor universal. It is also becoming clear that Western therapeutic practices do not translate well to non Western cultures. My experience here at CCLC has expanded my notions of self and what constitutes therapy in a cross-cultural context. In short, I learnt that the talking cure has severe limitations especially when working with an interpreter. So we are now examining other modalities of therapy.

In Art, Drama, and Drumming Therapy we are engaging in a wider use of the human sensorial field. But mainly we allow the individual to connect to and externalize

their process in the moment, in the here and now. This connection, however superficial or profound, is significant. It is a choice. In my opinion, we are responsible for creating contexts for freedom, freedom for our clients to choose how they wish to be and how they wish to express themselves. In the process they allow us glimpses, give us aspects, and share truths about themselves.

In art-based therapy, choices of form, rhythm, texture, narrative, emotional release, etc. create the experience and expression that in some way externalizes the interior processes of the individual immediately and directly. It is empowering and healing. On the whole, it leaves the participants energized and temporarily refreshed. It is done in community so there is no pressure on the individual or any

inside next issue: Time for Summer: A Glimpse of Upcoming CCLC Summer Programming

social labeling involved. Art-based therapy is a paradox: it is both a direct and an indirect way of healing.

Art Therapy is offered to refugees during their stay at Jeremiah's House at the Centre. Drumming Therapy is offered once a month and Drama Therapy is offered three times a week.



Funded by / Financé par



Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada

Canada



MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ontario