

**INTERNATIONAL DAY
IN SUPPORT OF**

VICTIMS OF TORTURE

**TRIUMPH
OVER
TORTURE**



Community Engagement

Engaging the community has always been a vital part of the work of CCVT. The CCVT was founded by volunteers who were doctors, lawyers and social service professionals, many whom were associated with Amnesty International. They had begun to see victims of torture in their practices as early as 1977. Many of the victims were in the process of claiming refugee status in Canada. The doctors saw the need for specialized counseling for the social and legal problems faced by this particular client group. Lawyers, social workers and community groups saw clients who were survivors of torture, often badly in need of treatment by doctors and other health professionals.

Goals and Values

Understanding that the issue of torture is a social one, the CCVT has deliberately chose a community approach since its inception: it responds to torture as a collective disruption, and fosters community building to counter the effects of trauma and dislocation through the volunteer program. Building communities is a two-way process tied to the characteristics of populations. As newcomers and survivors of torture, clients are under intense pressure to adjust to their new environment, to find ways of living with their trauma., and to become active community members. Volunteers foster change of informal and organizational competencies for dealing with everyday situations, from orientating newcomers to their surroundings to connecting them to institutional resources (educational, housing, health, employment, utilities, or immigration services). Volunteers, on their part, gain a greater awareness of the daily barriers that refugees encounter during resettlement in Canada, and of the human rights in the international context.

The two groups share their values and cultures with one another, through mutuality, develop quality of community building. More than instrumental ties, these relations grow into personal relationships. It fosters trust and reciprocity, and it helps build networks and opportunities for the articulation of grievances in the community.

Ultimately, the goals of volunteer programs are:

- To assist survivors in making the transition from victims to active community members
- To raise awareness about torture and war among general public
- To provide an effective means of cultural exchange in a non-threatening environment and in an atmosphere of trust and friendship, and
- To foster a strong community that voice against the practice of torture

Public Education, and community collaborative event initiatives such as World Refugee Day, International Day in support of Victims of Torture and Refugee rights day are some events that CCVT continues to play an important role.

As an anchor partner of United Way Toronto , CCVT every year hosts various United Way Toronto donors and engages in various CCVT activities such as sorting food donations, painting classes and gift wrapping of toys.

