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# VOLUNTEER CONNECTIONS

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) aids survivors in overcoming the lasting effects of torture and war. In partnership with the community the centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection and integrity and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families.

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**Message from Community Engagement Manager – Huda Bukhari**

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has taken on unprecedented proportions. With containment measures, the closure of many public places, and social distancing, our lives have been significantly affected. More than ever, we need to ensure the safety of our staff, clients and volunteers. To that end, CCVT has closed all its offices in the Greater Toronto Area and will reopen when it is safe to do so. Keep being updated on news, and practice physical distancing!

*From all of us at the downtown office, keep safe.*



## Message from CCVT Volunteer – Ari Barbalat, Connections Editor

I am just writing to send my thoughts and wishes to you and everyone in the CCVT community are well. What is on my mind is friends, relationships and family members of clients of CCVT who live in countries that have different health care standards to Canada's and perhaps could be affected if the situation worsens.

From a different perspective, the situation calls to mind the reality that in many countries around the world situations like this area commonplace: diseases, scarcity, natural disasters, authoritarianism/dictatorship/police state, states of emergency, and other forms of lockdown. What is new for us is sadly common for those who need to self-isolate during civil wars, gang violence, and other forms of strife. We can be learning from them and their experience.

## COVID-19 Updates:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>

<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/>

## New Staff

### Huda Bukhari – Community Engagement Manager

I have come back to CCVT after an absence of five years. I will be available to all through emails and hope to meet those I haven't met yet in person soon.

### Ismail Elnour – Community Engagement Worker

Ismail brings two years' experience of community engagement and is also seeking to meet all of you soon.

### Delima Mohd Khalid – Student Placement at Youth Program, George Brown College

## CCVT Activities

This newsletter will be focusing on Youth Programming held at CCVT and supported by our many volunteers. **Leah MacDonald, Youth Counselor & Delima Mohd Khalid, Student Placement**

### Youth Ambassador Leadership Training

Otherwise known as the CCVT Youth Advocacy Collective, this leadership training began in September 2019 and ended in February 2020. This program was led by Leah MacDonald, Child and Youth Settlement Counselor, supported by Delima Mohd Khalid, current placement student and CCVT volunteers. Made possible by Toronto Public Health, this program was a huge success that brought together a group of refugee youth and volunteers to connect over their shared experiences,

their vast array of skills and knowledge and to grow their ability as youth advocates.

Training sessions included *Planned Parenthood*, a workshop on consent and boundaries, and *Youth Speak*, which provided training in public speaking. Both sessions were thoroughly enjoyed by the participants and received excellent feedback. The program culminated in each of the Youth Ambassadors presenting on a topic they wish to continuously advocate for. Topics included Femicide Prevention, Youth and Drugs, Female Genital Mutilation, Food and Nutrition and Financial Literacy. The program was an inspiring one that supported many of the youth in strengthening their advocacy voices and taking that first step towards their long-term goals. We hope to be able to run it again!



*Youth Ambassadors receiving their certificates of completions (in an orderly fashion before the more candid posing came out!)*

*Youth Ambassadors with Youth Speaks after a gruelling public speaking training session!*



*2019 Youth Holiday Party*

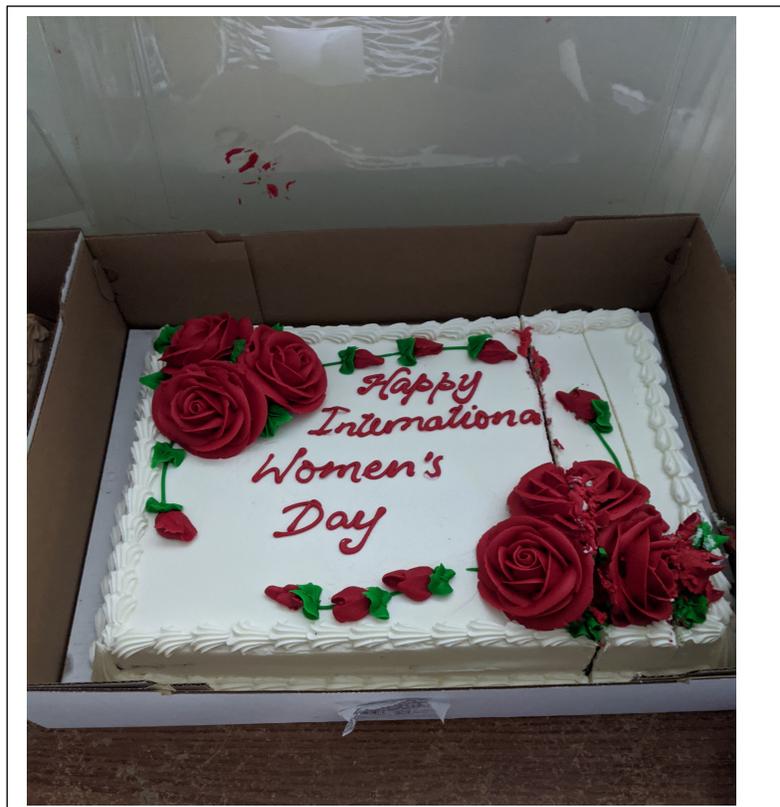
It was a cozy celebration last December with many cheery faces from the Youth Network. Everyone gathered at the CCVT downtown office for games, delicious food and lots more merriment. Karaoke was sung; Houses and gingerbread folk were decorated and promptly eaten!

**CCVT Support Groups:**

Three Support Groups for the Eritrean/Ethiopian, Spanish-speaking and Farsi-speaking clients had been running with the support of volunteers since January 2020.

**CCVT Special Activities:** CCVT Celebration of Black History Month; CCVT Celebration of International Women’s Day; CCVT Tax Clinic; RCT Client Computer Sign-up.

International Women’s Day Celebration with Speaker Talayeh Shomali, Education & Outreach Coordinator, Canadian Civil Liberties Association



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*“Isocrates says: I marvel at people who teach their children the histories of kings and their battles, and accounts of wars and of mankind’s hatreds and revenges; yet it never occurs to them that it were better to teach them tales of friendly association, histories of the winning of Affection and what is concomitant to that virtue in the way of comprehensive goods, and of Love and companionship, without which living is not possible and disregard of which life itself is out of the question.”*

*Nasir al-Din Tusi  
(Medieval Islamic  
Philosopher)*

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## Documentary Films to Recommend During the Slowdown

Please bear in mind that the perspectives presented are solely those of the film and filmmakers.

### Stealing a Nation

<https://youtu.be/PjNfXK6QpgY>

This film treats the plight of the local inhabitants of the Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean, which is presently known as Diego Garcia, and which was formerly known as the British Indian Ocean Territory. It examines the transfer of this territory from the UK to the US without sensitivity to the lives of those who live there.

### Beyond the Mat

<https://youtu.be/Ryt6uc4Ojes>

This documentary treats the backstage world of American pro wrestling (the WWF/WWE). It pays attention to athlete abuse, the popularization of violence and the plight of wrestlers who have worked there.

### The Coconut Revolution

<https://youtu.be/1Sl8KJDOqK4>

This documentary examines the history of the civil strife in Papua New Guinea, with emphasis on the secession movement in Bougainville. Facing a blockade by Papua New Guinea, coconuts come to represent the local ecology coming to the rescue of the local economy. This documentary is very informative and erudite. It provides a very thorough introduction to one of Melanesia's most severe international problems. This documentary is well worth the investment of one hour's time.

### Yemen: Kids and the War

<https://youtu.be/wpdZZF8t9x0>

This documentary analyzes the toll taken by the present war in Yemen undertaken by Saudi Arabia on children. It depicts kids in a variety of different roles, highlighting both suffering and resilience.

### Welcome Nowhere

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=w67lwex7Cas>

This documentary analyzes the situation facing Gypsy and Roma communities in present-day Europe. It’s an insightful look at how little Europe has really learned from the Holocaust, as the Gypsy and Roma still suffer from abuse, bigotry and discrimination in today’s European Union.