

# Volunteer Opportunities at CCVT



*The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) aids survivors of torture, war, genocide and crimes against humanity to overcome the lasting effects of torture and war. Working with the community, the Centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into the Canadian society, works for their protection and integrity, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. The CCVT gives hope after the horror!*

“Helping Survivors to find Hope and Joy after the Horror”

## CCVT YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM – MENTORS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED

### Skills and Experience Required

Must be at least 21 years of age; reside in the GTA; agree to a one year commitment as a Mentor; attend Mentor Training as required; and commit to a minimum of 4 hours per month with a Mentee; also a Good understanding of various Youth life needs will be an added asset. Post-Secondary Students are welcome to apply!

Mentors are required to inspire Newcomer Youth Mentees ages 13-25 years. They will be involved in one-on-one mentorship; and will contribute towards the Mentee's goals and lifestyle choices by creating a healthy and a positive relationship.

**Mentees expectations include:** Build skills and work on their goals; Enjoy virtual fun activities with their Mentor.

### Opportunity Requirements

**All our Volunteer programs require participants to have a Police Reference Check Report for volunteering with the Vulnerable Sector! This report must be submitted before starting volunteering with CCVT!**

The next step in our screening process for all potential Volunteers is a virtual interview. The interview lasts approximately 30 minutes and is an opportunity for Volunteers to learn more about CCVT and provides an opportunity for us to learn more about you. An updated resume will be required. We do not provide transportation to volunteers. After the initial interview, accepted candidates will be asked to provide 3 reference letters and after attending a New Volunteers Orientation Training will be signing a Confidentiality Agreement, Insurance Benefits Waiver and a Volunteer Youth Mentor Contract.

**Training:** Mentors will attend a mandatory Orientation Training session which is the first in a number of trainings that CCVT offers to provide insight and the tools necessary to support individuals and their families affected by war and torture from war-torn countries all over the world.

<https://app.betterimpact.com/Application?OrganizationGuid=d81bbe7d-f0ba-400a-b872-8b2cf3c6d55b&ApplicationFormNumber=1>

# The Connection

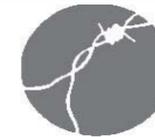
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VICTIMS OF TORTURE**  
SCARBOROUGH BRANCH

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALL CCVT VOLUNTEERS

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### Editors' Note:

The information provided in this publication is not controlled by the CCVT, and therefore may not reflect the Centre's views.



## THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE (CCVT)

This Year 2021 will be Virtually Recognizing



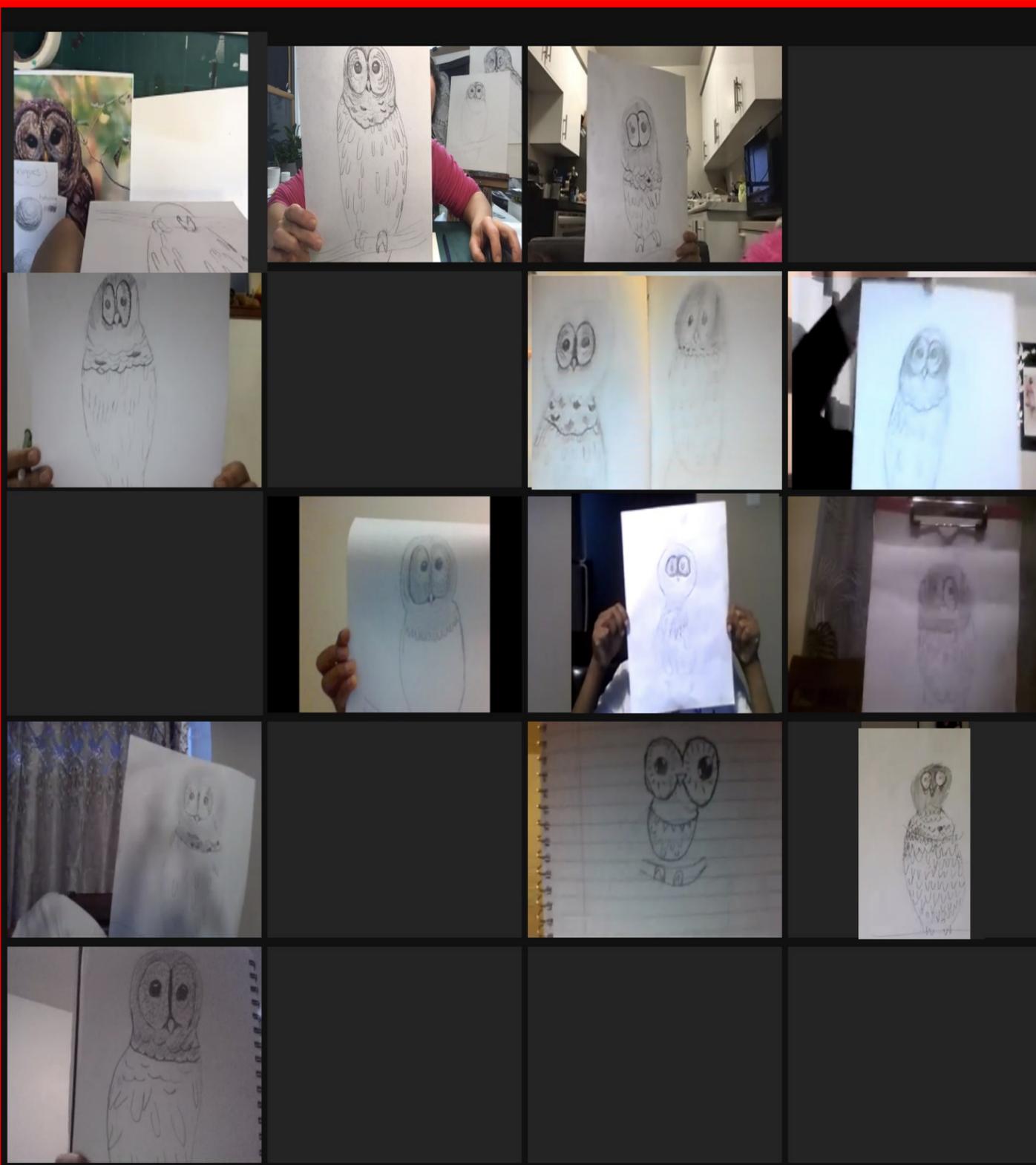
**AND**



**CCVT IS A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE!**

# The Children's Vibe Arts Lessons

The Joy of their Achievements



# Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events

## Mentoring and Tutoring a Youth



For the past year things have changed dramatically on how we interact as human beings towards one another. This Covid-19 pandemic has made an incredible impact on people's lives. Volunteering during this pandemic has had its few challenges.

My name is Manuel Romero-Araya, and I have been volunteering with CCVT since 2015. Before this pandemic, I would volunteer during the Summer Quest Program with other Volunteers, and we would take the Kids out to the Park and numerous of places to explore.

Different in the last 12 months. Since the start of the pandemic, it has come down to Zoom video calls with Clients and Volunteers. Not being able to interact with

one another in person has made it difficult to live comfortable at times. I miss going out with the Kids, and I am sure they miss leaving their homes to attend CCVT for a fun time.

For the last year, I have helped with interpreting Spanish language for a few clients and being a Youth Mentor to a Spanish speaking family. There is a Mexican Youth that I mentor who moved to Canada last year a month before the pandemic started. He told me how it has been hard for him to make new friends, due to classes being online and lockdowns happening. He has enjoyed exploring the city by himself, and even purchased a Camera to take pictures.

With restrictions being put into place, it has made it difficult for people to attend Restaurants, Movie Theatres, Malls and being outdoors with friends.

Hopefully now that vaccines are becoming available this difficult time we are facing will soon dissolve.

Now with Zoom calls, it will be easier to speak with Clients and assisting people whenever the opportunity arises. I have hope in humanity and if we all work together things will get better day by day.

*By: Manuel Romero-Araya  
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

## CCVT INCOME TAX CLINIC

### Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP) at CCVT



I've been asked to share my experience as a CVITP Tax Returns preparer for those who are interested in participating. First of all, you don't need to be a Tax expert to volunteer. Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) supplies the training and software that we need to

prepare Taxes for the clients.

Best yet, we have a dedicated CVITP help line where the wait times, around 5 minutes, are considerably less than the regular CRA lines. They are there to help us with any questions we have. Despite the training, I am always a little nervous at the beginning of a new Tax Season. Yet, once I have done a

couple of Returns, I regain my confidence and really enjoy the process. Having a sense of humor helps. I had an issue when I tried to transmit a Return due to a problem with the last name. When I looked, I saw I had spelt Mohammed as Mohammmed and was able to easily correct it.

In addition to learning a lot about Taxes, I am able to interact with people from many cultures who come from the 4 corners of the world. I love talking with the Clients and their Counsellors, who sometimes act as Interpreters.

It is so gratifying how appreciative everyone is. As a result of the pandemic, we did the Taxes remotely using ZOOM. I am looking forward to again interacting with people in person.

*By: Diane O'Neill  
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*



I started volunteering just as a stepping stone to gain experience towards a job in my field, after arriving in Canada a few years earlier. Now, several years later I am still enjoying this hobby which has become like second nature for me, with the CCVT Staff & fellow Volunteers family.

I've thoroughly enjoyed participating in the CVITP training both as a participant and on occasions as a Presenter, helping the new Volunteers to understand their roles and navigate the details of the CVITP program. The most enjoyable feature of this experience for me though, is seeing the joy on the faces of those CCVT Clients who receive our help-priceless.

The aspect I consider a bit challenging has been the language, for which the CCVT adequately provides a Counsellor or a Volunteer Interpreter to help with the translations.

This year I was really saddened to encounter one client who was disqualified, because she earned self-employed income whilst riding a bicycle with Uber. While I can understand the complexity in preparing those returns, it broke my heart to refuse assistance to the client.

I commend the staff at CCVT for their efficiency and foresight in arranging for every aspect of the exercise to run smoothly, this resulted in the virtual filing this season being as seamless as possible for us, the Volunteers.

*By: Marcelle La Fleur  
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

## Virtual Children's Art Lessons by Vibe Arts

In winter of 2021, the CCVT longtime community partner Vibe Arts visited the children of CCVT for Art lessons. Like everything else on the planet, we have had to pivot to a virtual platform.

For four sessions in January, professional Artist Sandra T. gave drawing instructions over Zoom directly from her Studio. The group was well attended with 14- 25 participants per session. While there were some familiar faces, most were new friends joining us whose families have become acquainted with CCVT during the pandemic. While the new program design has taken some getting used, it was a fun way for us to stay connected in the colder months while in lockdown.

Virtual programs have been a method to keep the work of CCVT going ahead in uncertain times, but it has not been without its difficulties. Our clients often have precarious housing situations. Being under housed in shelters or with large families make it difficult for participants to engage in quiet spaces.

Also the availability of devices and adequate WIFI have been a challenge for newcomers. For folks living in apartment buildings, internet signal is effected by the high volume of users trying to connect simultaneously; the problem is exacerbated after school, which is when my programs are generally run. Most obviously, prolonged screen time is making it difficult to stay focused and is having physical impacts on our bodies and posture.

As the warmer weather approaches, it is tough to convince individuals to log on when they could be outside basking in the sunshine.

Traditionally, the Child and Youth Program at Scarborough has been enjoyed by families in-person. Homework Club, Summer Quest and many other CCVT events have become well-known in our community for the numerous and unique benefits it has provided for our clients. Over the years we have looked forward to our time together to learn and grow. For now, you can find us on Zoom, where we are happy to welcome you.

In addition to our friends at Vibe Arts, we have been visited by High Park Nature Centre, Evergreen Brickworks, Stella's Place and Planned Parenthood, just to name a few. The younger children even tried Computer Coding with the aid of a Volunteer. We look forward to the days when we can meet again, but will continue to provide our tailored services in the virtual world.

*By: Nadia Umadat,  
Child and Youth Settlement Counsellor  
CCVT Scarborough Branch*

## Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events

### Facilitating the G1 Driver's Test Class in the Arabic Language & English Language; and The English Group Conversation Circle



#### My name is Ali Aljbouri

I have been a Volunteer with CCVT since May 2018, I served as Arabic language Interpreter who used to escort clients to Doctors, Lawyers, Social Workers' appointments, Teaching Assistant in the ESL Class which is run by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), a Facilitator for the English Group Conversation Circle and also a Tutor in the Computer Basic Skills Class. I facilitated the Citizenship Class where CCVT Permanent Resident clients are prepared to be ready for their Citizenship Written Test once they get their appointment dates.

Despite these very difficult circumstances because of the Corona Virus pandemic, a lot of things have changed in all areas of life in the whole world and the needs in our communities remained the same and even may have increased further and It is amazing to know that in spite of the circumstances all employees and volunteers of the Canadian

Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT), do their utmost virtually, to meet the needs of the Centre's clients while abiding the Government's restrictions due to COVID-19 restrictions to stay safe from the pandemic.

Due to this epidemic, I'm only a Facilitator for the G1 Driver's Test Class in the Arabic and English Language and occasionally facilitate the English Group Conversation Circle. I render all my services virtually on Zoom Videos.

I am so happy that I am already seeing the results of these lessons as recently 2 of my students who submitted their G1 Driver's Test and passed successfully. In the English Group Conversation Circle, participants have gradually improved their conversation skills.

In conclusion, I'm proud of being involved with CCVT, especially during this challenging Pandemic time where we are all communicating and providing services electronically and by Zoom.

When I see the clients of CCVT achieve what they want during these difficult circumstances, that gives me pride and happiness in what I do, enthuses accomplished successes and continued moral support that I get from CCVT Staff, gives me the motivation to continue providing assistance in any other areas where support is required.

*By: Ali Aljbouri,  
PhD. Business Administration  
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

## Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events

### Mentoring and Tutoring a Youth



I have helped the Youth with his Grade 11 Math. I have also been helping him understand or translate the questions he gets for Homework, so he can understand what the Teacher wants him to do. We have been working steadily together since September 2020 right until mid last month.

Recently, he has been doing most of his Homework on his own without my help. He would need help with his Homework Monday to Friday for at least 2 to 3 hours in the evening. Only during the months of January to mid April did our sessions start lasting 5 minutes at times.

It is more challenging to tutor or help someone with any subject or problem they have over Zoom or Skype. Since my friend the Mentee did not have a Camera, I had to take pictures of my notes on how

to solve a problem, and email it to him, or try to walk him through it verbally.

Giving verbal instructions led to frustrations for both of us, at such times I really missed the fact that we cannot have person to person contact because I know if I was with him I could explain it or show him how to solve the problem in a way he would understand, as this was the way we used to do it before the lockdown.

Despite the downside to online communication, I was still able to teach and explain what I needed to for my friend to understand what he needed to, even if it took a little while and sometimes a lot of repetition or different way to get the information clear to him. I really look forward to a time when we will go back to doing the homework at the Centre during the Homework Club time and not to have to worry about Covid-1 anymore.

*By: Chris James  
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

## Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events

### Facilitating a Seniors English Group Conversation Circle



The first week was introductory and I got ideas about what people would like to talk about and how much they could understand when I spoke. I was given some ideas of topics and some people said they would like to practice reading. This idea has proved to be really helpful getting people to engage, talk and eventually move into more conversations and discussions.

I now download some material each week from the internet so I can share my screen and they can practice a little reading, comprehension and vocabulary. I find this is helpful in developing the opportunity to move into more conversation and find topics they are interested in. It has been challenging and at the same time rewarding getting to know people in this way and despite the rather unnatural interaction on Zoom feel we are starting to develop relationships and their participation has been growing.

I trust that as people sign in week to week they are benefitting and getting something out of our time together. I enjoy doing research each week to find suitable material to present during our conversation time.

It is a good feeling to reach out to people and feel useful in this difficult time I hope maybe we will be able to meet in person in the near future and learn more about each other and see how their confidence in their English speaking skills grows.

*By: Janet Priston  
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

A few weeks ago the Volunteer Coordinator approached me to ask me if I would be able to lead a Senior's Conversation Group for a group of Seniors interested in improving their English conversation skills. A virtually conducted Class on Zoom videos. I was a little unsure about doing this on zoom although not difficult to use it but can be a little difficult to relate and have a normal conversation with groups of people.

My previous experience volunteering with the CCVT had been in the ESL Class and Befriending; I had only been involved in conversation groups a few times. The client I was befriending is now in long term care so my contact with her is now very limited.

I agreed to lead the group about six weeks ago and have since started to get a small group of clients signing in each week we started with one or two and now up to five or six. It is not always easy to just start a conversation with people you don't know and who are a little reticent to speak in English when they are not confident of their skills.

## Virtual Volunteer Activities and Events

### Facilitating The English Group Conversation Circle



I do my research and pick a topic for conversation each week. I then prepare questions to ask of each student. Some students do not use their real name and log in as "Galaxy" or "iPhone5" or some other device brand. I speak to black squares in every Class, every week, and I in the beginning I used to question if my lessons have value. So many times, there was no answer when I call on a student to answer a question. I could wonder if anyone is still listening or have they logged in for attendance purposes and are doing other work at the back! Many times, there are noisy children in the background and the parent has to attend to their needs too!

I try to encourage my students to ask me questions on anything of interest to them. When this happens, it creates a different kind of "buzz" among them and sometimes they will ask questions of each other. I'm always pleased when the group interacts this way. But still, they don't all know each other as they cannot "see" each other!

I wish CCVT could require all Conversation Class students to log in with video so we can all enjoy each other and engage in more interesting conversations since going back to in-person Classes is still in question!

*By: Ethel Forester,  
Volunteer, CCVT Scarborough Branch*

On Thursdays for one hour each week I facilitate a Conversation Class and on Saturdays also for one hour, I facilitate a Citizenship Class.

I have been trying different ways over the past four months to encourage conversation and get the students to interact.

My challenge is that I still don't know who some of these students are! They do not reveal their faces and most of them mute their mikes when they log in. It is important to be able to "meet" your students to facilitate conversation - facial expressions mean a lot and help me understand how to help with enunciation when a student repeatedly makes an error or needs help with proper sentence structure in conversing. All-in-all, I do understand that I am dealing with survivors of torture and I go ahead and help them the way they way they are comfortable with.

## A CCVT CLIENT'S STORY



### Samuel Kisitu, CCVT Client

I am a Precarious Worker who disinfected the Subway, helped the disabled and a PSW on the Pandemic frontlines. I am a Social Activist and a member of Jane Finch Action Against Poverty.

It is noticed that my story in the Toronto Star made the plight of Temporary Workers more visible which influenced the Canadian government to open doors to Permanent Residence for 90000 Temporary Workers.

I am currently demanding Ontario Government to implement a Regulatory Model for professional recognition and the validation of the valuable work of Personal Support Workers (PSWs), Paid Sick Days and a descent workplace for Essential Workers.

As a member of Dominion Church International Toronto and other organizations in Jane-Finch Area, my deputation contributed to the approval of the land transfer from Metrolinx for the development of the Jane - Finch Community Hub and Centre for the

Arts by the City of Toronto Licensing Committee.

I am a recent Alumni of Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University where I completed a Certificate in Social Enterprise.

I hold a Diploma in Secondary Education, specializing in Fine Art from the National Teachers College at Kaliro|Kyambogo University in Uganda. I taught in Agok Secondary School in Southern Sudan and other Schools in Uganda.

The New African Canadians nominated and celebrated me for the 2020 Inspiration Award!



I wish to **THANK CCVT** for all the settlement support that has enabled me to settle in Canada peacefully!

**I PROUDLY SAY THANK YOU CCVT FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART!**

**By: Samuel Kisitu**  
Co-Founder and President  
*My Community My Concerns*

## A CCVT CLIENT'S STORY

Mr. Samuel Kisitu is a well known client at CCVT for his openness; political and social engagement with various community organizations and his desire to make a change in the world. He arrived to Canada in 2019 as a refugee claimant from Uganda. His life was in serious danger due to his non-supporting political opinions and activities with the current Ugandan government. As the eldest child in his family, he had many responsibilities such as bringing financial needs. His parents and grandfather were fallen veterans which made his family eligible to make claims of compensation.

In 2010, Mr. Kisitu started an organization called *Luwero Triangle Development* to help demand for the delayed compensations; reach better socio economic goals and create income generating activities to defeat poverty in Kanyanda Village. Many initiatives were made through this organization such as workshops, conferences, training programs, youth programs, etc. Due to the lack of changes in the village and lack of compensation provided to families, Mr. Kisitu petitioned against the President of Uganda and Luwero Triangle War Veterans Association.

Mr. Kisitu desired to become more politically engaged by researching and understanding the historical struggles of Uganda. By integrating research and intergenerational traumatic experiences into his work, this politicized that the Ugandan President had to become more considerate to the families who brought him power. Mr. Kisitu fought for truth, justice, equality, and socio economic growth. He was severely tortured and arrested numerous times due to launching campaigns such as "TOGIKWATAKO" and "RED WEEK" against the President and supporting parties. Due to the ongoing harassment, Mr. Kisitu had to flee Uganda to save his life.

After coming to Canada, Mr. Kisitu desires to make awareness by sharing his story to the community. He wishes to address the ongoing injustices taking

place in Uganda and be a voice for those who continue to be targeted based discrimination and oppression. Mr. Kisitu is grateful to start a new journey in Canada where he no longer has to fear for his life. He aspires to give back to society by taking part in various community activities. Mr. Kisitu is actively engaged in political activities among the Ugandan diaspora living in Toronto and has participated in numerous political meetings about the ongoing political situations in Uganda. As a client, Mr. Kisitu is very confident and passionate about his work. He is also actively engaged in numerous CCVT programs and groups which is an extremely proud moment for our organization.

During Covid, Mr. Kisitu contributed his time as an essential worker, cleaning and disinfecting subway cars and working in retirement homes during the deadliest outbreak of Covid-19. Unfortunately, he developed Covid-19 symptoms in Spring of 2020, which made things harder, especially meeting financial ends and finding housing support. Mr. Kisitu struggled during the pandemic and realized that many temporary workers were placed at a high risk in order to make a decent living in Canada. Receiving employment insurance was not a choice since many precarious and temporary worker are not eligible.

Although Mr. Kisitu is still facing some challenges even after a year into the pandemic, he is now given status as a Convention Refugee. He has developed a non-profit organization called *My Community, My Concerns* and has been nominated for the Award *New African Canadians Inspiration Award 2020. Samuel Kisitu, a Free Man.*

**By: Mathura Nagaratnam**  
Settlement Counsellor,  
CCVT Scarborough Branch