

CCVT Summer Newsletter



CANADIAN CENTRE
FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE

2021 Downtown Office



CCVT aids survivors in overcoming the lasting effects of torture and war. In partnership with the community, the center 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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Disclaimer: The CCVT Connections, is fueled by the following goals: to engage volunteers in important events, news and meetings. In doing so, it acknowledges the vital role they play in fulfilling CCVT's mandate. It is published quarterly. The information provided in this publication is not controlled by the CCVT, and therefore, may not reflect the Centre's views, staff and team.



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Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

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General Global News



Suprise at the Euro 2020: Like many other things, Euro 2020 was postponed for 2021 due to covid, but that did not stop the fans of the sport from cheering their teams on from home. Hungry, being one of the small nations hosting euros allowed maximum capacity fans to their game against France. The rest of the world questioned whether that was a wise decision, but the Hungarian prime minister declared that the government was rather overly successful with their vaccination distortion and Hungry couldn't miss out on a game of a lifetime. More on page 19.

Cautious but optimistic: As vaccines slowly rollout and life nears normalcy there are a few factors to still be mindful about. The vaccine while effective needs to be adopted by the majority of the population before we are truly in the clear. While this happens more and more infectious and deadly variants of the virus are emerging. Keep wearing masks and staying safe. More on this on page 22.



Remote work is here to stay: McKinsey estimates that 20-25% of workplaces will continue to include remote work for 3-5 days a week. this is a 5 fold increase since before the pandemic. Some companies have already sold their offices.

About 40% of the workforce is considering quitting: As people got used to remote work and stimulus checks, not having those options is causing the biggest employee turnover event since the year 2000.

Has COVID19 changed our perception on Education: As a student for myself remote learning has been extremely challenging. However, I do see the appeal of it, in this day and age an average student who does not belong to an wealthy family cannot afford not to work, even if they are in school full time and COVID has helped many realize that they can get a remote education and earn money while cutting down on food and travel expenses.



WELCOMING NEW CCVT STAFF

Hi Everyone! My name is Korey Karbasi and I'm the new bilingual (English/Farsi) Summer Student! I moved to Canada when I was 13 years old in 2012 And it has been the greatest gift my parents have given me.

I'm graduating from McMaster University, in November 2021 with an Honours Bachelor's of Science in Kinesiology!

Likes:

- Stand-up comedy
- Persian Kabob and sushi
- Morning coffee
- Travelling the world



Korey Karbasi, New Summer Student

Dislikes:

- Less than 6 hours of sleep
- Rude/impatient people in public
- Wet socks
- Misinformation

What I do in my free time:

- Research and learn about new scientific concepts
- Hang out with friends and family
- Workout and Meditate

I'm Really excited to contribute to an organization that actively makes a difference in people's lives everyday.





Farah Naaz Noori, New Summer Student

Hello, my name is Farah and I am a York University graduate with honours in Political Science. I am multilingual, and I would love to run for office one day, so I am counting on your vote.

Likes:

- Languages
- Soccer
- Reading
- Travelling
- Giving back to the community

Dislikes:

- People are rude to newcomers or elders
- Lack of compassion

What I do in my free time:

- Studying for the LSAT
- Play or watching soccer
- Educate me on humanitarian issues
- Devoting my time to non-profit organizations that help uplift women





Naziha Mahmoud, Anti-human Trafficking Counsellor

Hello, my name is Naziha Mahmoud, I am the Antihuman Trafficking Counsellor at CCVT.

Born in Eritrea, I graduated as an MD from Dubai, and I am currently living in Canada. I have worked as a research coordinator, clinical care coordinator, medico legal interpreter and youth mentor.

I like playing sports, baking, and spending time with family and friends. I also enjoy listening to Hip-hop and I am not a fan of Sushi.



Interview with CCVT Mental Health Counselor Domine Rutayisire BSW, Msw rsw

Introduction:

I have a Bachelor of Social Work degree from the University of Windsor and a Master's of Social Work degree from Wayne State University in Michigan. Since 2006, I have been working as a Clinical Counselor in mainly Health Care, Mental Health and Education Settings. My focus in graduate school was in Mental Health and Addiction. I have been registered with the Ontario College of Social Workers since 2003. I am multi-lingual and speak English, French, my native language Kinyarwanda and Kirundi (a similar language to Kinyarwanda). I also have a basic knowledge of Swahili language.

How long I have been with CCVT:

I have been working as a Mental Health Counselor at CCVT since March 2016, so it has been a little over 5 years. In addition to providing individual, family and group counseling, I have been facilitating a Trauma Informed Certificate Course that is run once monthly for 9 sessions starting September to June following year. I also facilitate the Health Committee meetings. I would like to add that I have been working with survivors of war and torture in different capacities since 2003.



Domine Rutayisire BSW, MSW RSW
Mental Health Counselor

Likes: I like to read about different topics and have always enjoyed reading. My favorite topics are readings related to wellness and self-care. I am also interested in people and places and I like to travel. I have so far visited 9 different countries on four different continents.

How I use my free time: On my free time, I do volunteer work in the community. I am currently on the executive board of a local Immigrant Women's Association that promotes wellness.

Dislikes: I don't like heat/hot weather even though I grew up in a tropical country.



How I have been managing during the Pandemic: At the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic, there was anxiety of not knowing what is coming next and how long the lockdown would last. Also since I have been working in the Mental Health program, I have always had a social work placement student to assist and it was helpful. Since the lockdown, the placement program was suspended and I had to be more creative in order to keep up. I also tried to stay optimistic/positive by taking one day at a time. When I am not working, I stay physically active by taking regular walks in my neighborhood. I stay virtually connected with my family and friends as well.



How I communicate with my colleagues remotely:

The quickest way my coworkers and I communicate is via email since we frequently read our emails, we also communicate by phone or via Zoom. We have created a whatsapp group chat as well and we keep up with each other that way.



CCVT support:

The Centre has been very supportive with our virtual work. In addition to providing us with work laptops and phones to use, they have been proactive in making sure that we are not socially isolated. At the beginning of the pandemic, we had frequent group check ins mostly on Fridays and individual check ins with the supervisor once a month or as needed. There is also the Wellness program that unites staff from all locations. We are currently involved with Gardening and CCVT has provided us with the different seeds, and a facilitator who meets with us bi-weekly to coach us on better gardening techniques.



How I keep in touch with my clients virtually:

A majority of my clients prefer to communicate via phone and email. There are also those who are fine with Zoom sessions. The issue is that for those clients who may be feeling down, they would prefer not to be seen on camera.

Issues faced by the clients I serve:

A significant number of the clients I see present with Depression and Anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other mental health related issues. Due to their mental health issues, COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly challenging for them and their anxiety level has gone up. I have had to have frequent sessions with them to prevent crisis. The clients have been able to slowly adjust to the pandemic and most have avoided trips to the emergency room. With the pandemic slowly easing up, return to “normal” is in the horizon.



CCVT events:

- Human rights Webinar (June 4rth, 2021)
- Pride (June 11th, 2021)
- Refugee day (June 18th, 2021)
- International day for victims of torture (June 25th, 2021)
- Picnic in July (July 30th, 2021)
- Wellness Program Meetings on Every other Friday (Full article below)



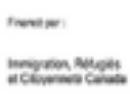
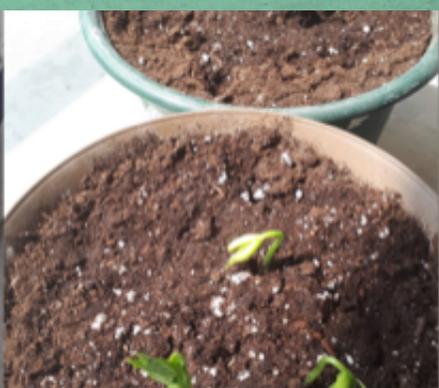


CCVT Wellness Program



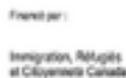
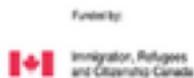
Every other Friday, the CCVT staff has been gathering in a zoom call to participate in our wellness meetings. But unlike every other organization, these meetings include a little more than one person lecturing the employees about mental health, bullying and meditation. At CCVT our wellness meetings utilize the healing power of nature!

Chizuru our wellness instructor is a registered social worker and has worked with CCVT for many years. She's a community based researcher, and teaches social work at York. She's currently in training to become a Horticultural Therapist and a Forest Therapy Guide. She cares very deeply about land stewardship, ecological justice, Indigenous sovereignty and refugee rights.



Here is Chizuru's explanation for her own program

Nature/ Garden Club was designed to introduce the healing energy of nature, to notice nearby nature in daily life for personal and professional self-care, and to offer simple garden and nature programming for health promotion and therapeutic intervention. Nature is truly healing! Many Indigenous communities across the world have been aware of the importance of nature-based healing for centuries. There are many studies that have discussed the importance of nature to human wellness as well - here is one quote from a research by McMahan and Estes (2015): "Nature improves emotional well-being by increasing positive affect and, to a lesser extent, decreasing negative affect. ...Contact with nature provides benefit even in small doses. Incorporating brief ventures in nature into one's daily routine may thus be one relatively easy and enjoyable way to achieve sustainable increase in subjective well-being."





During the program (which was designed to be about 8 weeks), Chizuru shared garden/nature-based activities that participants could easily do in an apartment or a house. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the program was offered virtually (though if it ever moves to in-person it will be even better).

All the activities were meant to encourage a deeper connection with everyday nature, enhancing one's five senses to enjoy the present moment (similar to mindfulness practice).

Chizuru's hope is that the participants will have another tool for self-care and wellness, and perhaps it may even open up your desire for land stewardship and expand your love for Mother Earth.



Volunteer Introduction



Zac Schraeder CCVT Volunteer

Zac is a Student Services Advisor and Skills for Success educator at Toronto Film School where he helps develop and improve school, community, and mental health resources for students – including those in the Queer, First Generation, and Immigrant communities.

He is also a compassionate listener who helps students one-on-one to visualize their goals, create plans for success, develop vital professional and self-care skills, and realize their own greatness. His goal is to see every student graduate on time, to their academic standard, and to enjoy the fruits of their success. He also volunteers as a refugee mentor at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture.

Zac is about to complete a Master of Arts program in Counselling Psychology where he's specializing in queer and newcomer mental health. He hopes to offer affordable therapy and mental health services to marginalized communities who experience a lack of access.



Contributing to Refugees' Overall Wellness: Support Through Mentorship

by: Zac Schraeder

Since the time of the American revolution, the territory known as Canada has been a place of refuge for many people. This was true for Loyalists in the late 1700s; Polish peoples feeling Prussian occupation in the 1800s; Italians feeling the conflict that stemmed from Italy's unification efforts; Ukrainians feeling Austro-Hungarian rule; Jews fleeing persecution stemming from European fascism; and many other queer, racialized, and marginalized groups escaping torture, threats, conflicts, and duress from many areas of the world.

Existing as a place of refuge is important and necessary in today's world. However, an unfortunate reality exists where the psychosocial needs of refugees are not being adequately met in this country. It leads to poorer health outcomes compared to other immigrants. Many people who come to Canada as refugees face mental health challenges and struggles. In fact, PTSD and depression are found to predominate among refugee populations. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health reveals that within six months of settlement, refugees in Canada experience an array of mental health challenges ranging from culture shock, to homesickness, to other more serious issues. Support with mental health for refugees, particularly as it relates to trauma, is scarce and urgently needed. Long waits for limited, affordable mental health care.



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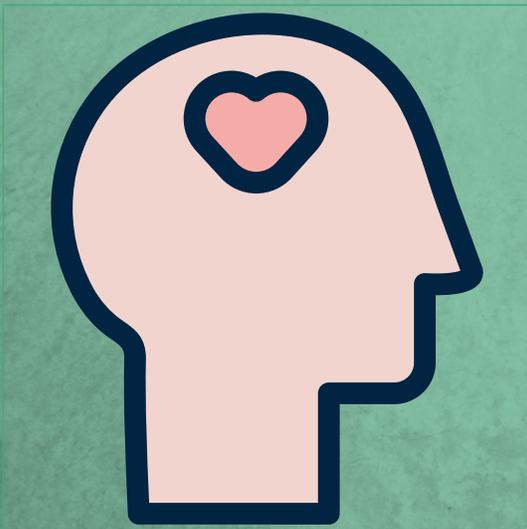
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In January 2016, the Mental Health Commission of Canada published a document titled *Supporting the Mental Health of Refugees in Canada*. It outlines Canada's current mental health response to refugees. What stands out the most is the call for a focus on peoples' overall wellness and recognizing how resilient individuals are in the face of tremendous challenges. In the context of refugees, this means coordinating accessible services that help address things like loss, trauma, separation and focusing on the goals and hopes for the future.



Many places like the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) support refugees from this perspective of overall wellness. Within them, several psychological services exist to help with mental health issues that may arise, as do educational programs and social events to help build skills and connections. The mentorship program, something I have been involved with and fervently believe in, is also an important aspect of supporting those who need it. Research points to the value of mentorship in helping people in a variety of ways:



Language and conversing: mentees have the opportunity to practice their acquired language skills in social situations, which helps cultivate a feeling of acceptance and confidence.

Developing professional skills: mentees can get assistance with mock interviews, resume building, navigating the job market, and networking within the community, which helps with employment prospects and a sense of autonomy.

Help with integrating care: with confidentiality front-of-mind, mentors can help mentees with attaining government health insurance, accessing mental health care, and learning about how the local health system works. Refugees widely experience barriers to care often related to a lack of knowledge or confidence. Having someone to help with this greatly increases overall wellness and contributes to greater overall health for longer.



Providing opportunities for socializing: while places like CCVT offer opportunities for socializing and making connections, mentors can help mentees with finding friend groups based on hobbies, interests, religion, and any other commonalities within their communities. This helps with healthy integration and formation of bonds that are essential in sustaining positive health outcomes.



Mentorship, therefore, is an incredibly effective way of helping refugees overcome many of the unfortunate barriers that exist within the system. In fact, they also fulfill what the Mental Health Commission of Canada's believes are important: overall wellness rather than simply addressing symptoms, and a focus on resilience and looking towards the future. Mentorship is a sustainable, personal, rewarding piece of making Canada even more welcoming, effective as a place of refuge.

Resources

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doi:<http://dx.doi.org.libraryservices.yorkvilleu.ca/10.1007/s10903-013-9835-3>



Soccer as we know it, could not exist without immigration

By: Farah Noori

Euro 2020 took place in 2021 with many surprises that the soccer fans did not anticipate. The competition began with the fans predicting that powerhouses like the French national team, who were crowned the World Cup winners in 2018, were favourites. However, to our shock, most of the teams who were favourites were eliminated by the quarter-finals. The final took place in London well known Wembley Stadium between Italy and England. After 2 full-time whistles, Italy won in Penalties and though this wasn't a big deal to the Italians considering their soccer heritage, on the other hand, England was set to play their tenth in Euros, and if they won they would win the trophy after 55 years. Unfortunately, due to some managerial decisions, England was once left just short of winning. Nonetheless, what really fascinates me, is how immigration has shaped this young talented English team, according to sources England would only have three players of their starting eleven, which is perhaps just as beautiful if not more than the beautiful game itself.



Canadian Women's Soccer Team Became Olympic Gold-Medalist

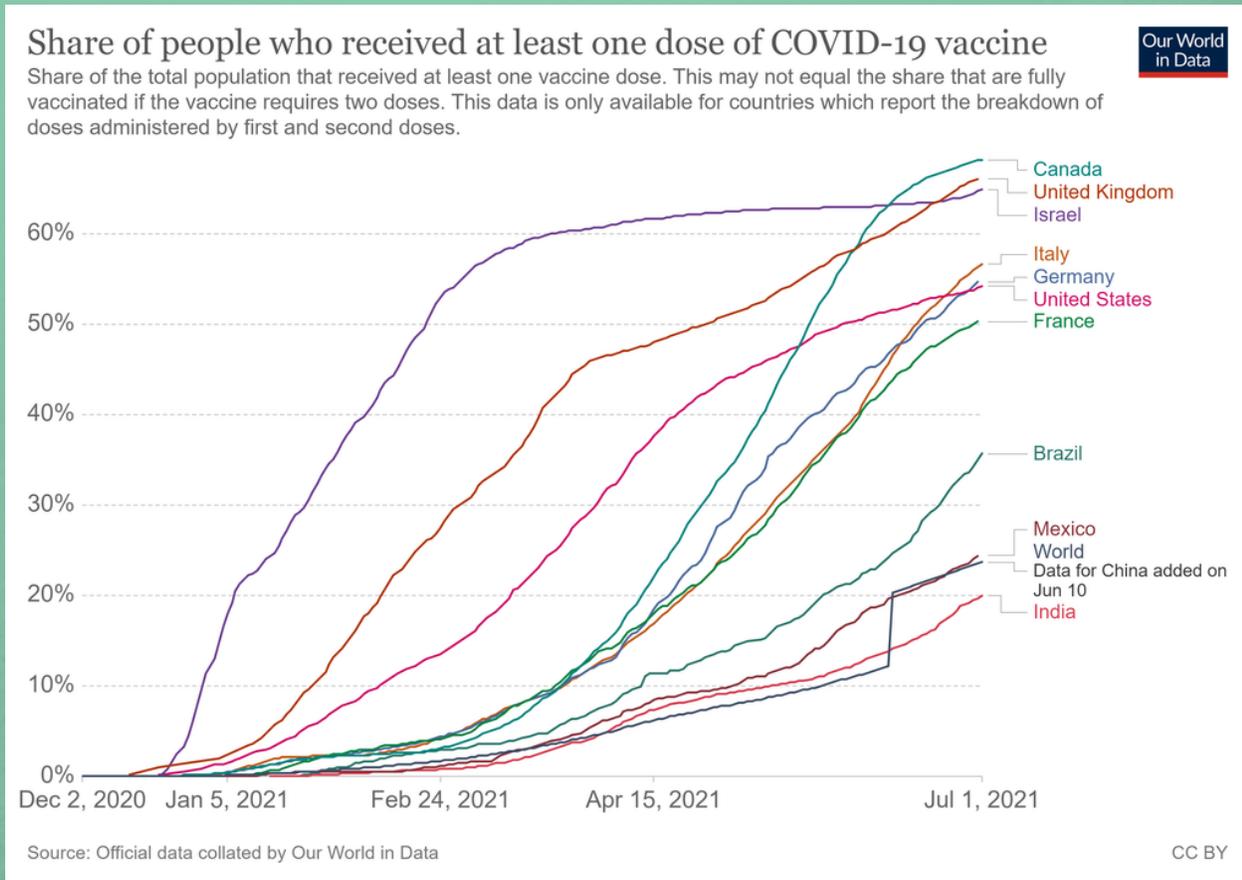
by: Farah Noori

Canada won gold in the Olympics in women's soccer for the first time since 1904, with many PoC representation. It's been a long anticipated win for women's soccer in Canada, a special moment for all those who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes for this moment. However, its evident that this gold medal is the most special for the Canadian captain Christine Sinclair who has dedicated 21 years of her life to the game. Sinclair has played 304 games and 187 goals in her career. However, it was the younger ladies on the team that carried Canada throughout the tournament. Shoutout to these incredibly hardworking and brilliant women.



Light at the End of the Dark COVID Tunnel

By: Korey Karbasi



Give yourself a round of applause. Canadians are ahead of the world in vaccinations per capita even though the rest of the world had a head start. Maybe its because we are also the most educated population in the world and we trust in the scientific process since we were taught about it over and over in school. Either way, herd immunity is at its best in the great white north and the dark age of COVID-19 seems to be coming to an end.

Or is it?...

One of the most concerning aspects of this pandemic that has been worrying people with science degrees is the mutation rate. COVID is currently spreading at an alarming rate in other regions of the world. This is allowing the virus to mutate and become more contagious and deadly. Specifically the Delta variant has been a huge concern for virologists all around the world.

However, all that being said, the vaccines do provide additional immunity towards all COVID variants so all we can do right now is keep getting vaccinated.





Another thing vaccinated countries like Canada, the US, Israel and the Great Britain can do is to share their vaccines with countries like India. This allows the virus to spread at a slower rate and consequently reduce the number of problematic mutations that may arise. These countries have too many doses at their disposal and yet their people refuse to take them. These doses will expire soon unless they are donated to countries that need them. Immunizing the world would make our countries also safer from deadlier strains of this virus so it is time to put greed aside and think globally.

However, on the bright side, the vaccine is allowing for the economy to slowly open up. Life as we know it is going back to the way things were before this nightmare began. Therefore, until everything is fully open, all we can do is stay patient, stay safe and keep getting vaccinated.

Resources

Ritchie, H., Ortiz-Ospina, E., Beltekian, D., Mathieu, E., Hasell, J., Macdonald, B., . . .
Roser, M. (2020, March 05). Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations - Statistics and Research. Retrieved from <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>



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