



**SCF**  
SYRIAN CANADIAN  
FOUNDATION

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**  
**2021**

**INSPIRE   EMPOWER   CONNECT**



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# OUR JOURNEY

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This year we embarked on an exciting mission to build welcoming communities.

We successfully delivered powerful programming, in person and virtually, as well as introduced new initiatives that address the needs of the communities we serve.

We organized several events, **celebrated our 5th year anniversary**, facilitated crowdfunding campaigns, and were recognized for our positive impact in the community through awards and grant opportunities.

We also continued to prosperously strengthen our relationship with community partners as well as foster new connections with organizations and funders that share our commitment to **empowering newcomers of diverse backgrounds while promoting cross-cultural exchanges within Canadian society.**

This year was particularly different as the pandemic posed many challenges for our programs. However, our organization innovatively adapted to the virtual world! Many of our programs were successfully facilitated virtually to protect the safety and well-being of our community members.

We developed and launched Phase 2 of HER Startup, **a first-of-its-kind** entrepreneurship program with our partner, Jumpstart Refugee Talent. We witnessed the resilience and dedication of refugee women with entrepreneurial drive in our pursuit of creating an accessible program that not only offers training but guarantees seed funding and supports women through one year of incubation.

We have had an exciting year filled with significant impact and look forward to **pushing the boundaries** of our legacy into 2022!

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# OUR MISSION

At SCF, our mission statement goes beyond a declaration of intent and translates into everyday action. Our story began with a deep desire to create a strong sense of community and belonging for newcomers and refugees, and this sentiment continues to ring true as our programming and initiatives evolve over the years.

Many members of our organization, from our employees to our volunteers and summer interns, have shared lived experiences of migration, displacement, and integration.

This connection, along with rigorous engagement with research and experts, has allowed us to earn the trust of the communities we service and develop programs that make a positive impact.

Our programs are designed to be culturally aware, adaptive, and responsive to the evolving needs of our clients.

Most importantly, we engage newcomers in our program development and facilitation, creating opportunities for knowledge exchange, skill-building, and civic engagement.

Whether it is a group volunteering session in a community fundraising, a session with an English tutor, a day of creating a film exploring life narratives with peers, or an entrepreneurship workshop teaching the fundamentals of starting a business, the main outcome is empowerment and fostering meaningful connections.

“

**REFUGEES DIDN'T JUST ESCAPE A PLACE. THEY HAD TO ESCAPE A THOUSAND MEMORIES UNTIL THEY'D PUT ENOUGH TIME AND DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM AND THEIR MISERY TO WAKE TO A BETTER DAY**

**—NADIA HASHIMI**

**AUTHOR OF BEYOND THE BRIGHT SEA**





## WHERE WE WORK & WHO WE SERVICE






SCF predominately serves clients living in the Greater Toronto Area but have delivered program in cities all across Southern Ontario.

Our client demographics are diverse, however, we have a particular focus on recent newcomer youth and families, as well as refugee women. The majority of our clients are Arabic speakers and English is often not their first language.

Our program designs and outreach efforts specifically ensure we are fostering the inclusion of the most vulnerable newcomers. Many of our clients have not had the opportunity to obtain higher education and face the challenges of illiteracy, disability, trauma, and poverty.

### SOUTHERN ONTARIO

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-  MISSISSAUGA & PEEL REGION
-  TORONTO
-  SCARBOROUGH
-  HAMILTON
-  HALTON REGION



## 5 YEAR ANNIVERSARY FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

To celebrate the anniversary of the arrival of Syrian Refugees, SCF hosted a virtual celebration, *"A New Home in Canada"* on ZOOM with a 415,000 reach and 144,000 views on our livestream!



## HOMESTARTER KIT

SCF partnered with a Toronto-based shelter to provide **50 refugee women** with customized Home Starter and Wellness Support kits valued at \$300-500 filled with home essentials.



## NATAWASAL: DIGITAL SKILLS FOR SENIORS PROJECT

This project connected Arabic-speaking newcomer seniors to the digital world through an intergenerational volunteer model that paired youth volunteers with senior participants in Arabic.

# 2021 PROGRAMS



THE FAMILIES COME FROM  
VARIOUS COUNTRIES INCLUDING  
NIGERIA, SUDAN, CONGO,  
SOMALIA & ETHIOPIA.



## PANDEMIC RESPONSE



## HOME STARTER KIT

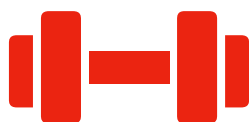
In response to the pandemic, The Syrian Canadian Foundation (SCF) partnered with a Toronto-based shelter and temporary housing services to provide 50 refugee women, many of whom are single mothers, with customized Home Starter Kits and Wellness Support.

Many refugees were moving into empty units with little to no belongings. Lockdown restrictions limited access to furniture, thrift stores, and donation centers that refugees normally rely on. To address these needs, SCF put together customized kits valued at \$300-500, depending on family size, that were filled with essentials including cookware, pots and pans sets, bedding, blankets, lighting, and cleaning supplies.





## PANDEMIC RESPONSE



### VIRTUAL FITNESS PROGRAM

Competitive para-athletes Ousama Juha and Dima Juha ran weekly virtual fitness classes for Arabic speaking newcomers with physical disabilities. In this past year, we have seen great success in running virtual fitness classes for newcomers with disabilities, virtual women's wellness support groups, and various recreational and skill-building activities for youth to promote healthy communities during the pandemic.





## **ARABIC SPEAKER VACCINATION PROMOTION PROJECT**

During the pandemic, SCF launched a COVID-19 hotline operating 5 days a week. The hotline aims to answer concerns and questions regarding vaccination, refers them to nearby vaccination clinics, and helps with vaccination appointment bookings.

Vaccine awareness webinars have been successfully conducted to debunk myths, misconceptions, and stigmas surrounding COVID-19 and vaccinations under this program.



## **VACCINE COMMUNITY INNOVATION CHALLENGE**

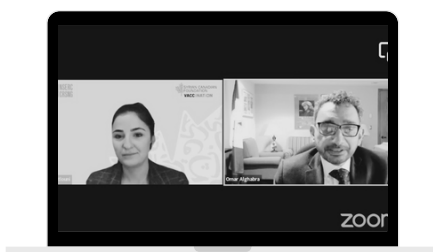
The Syrian Canadian Foundation produced a COVID-19 awareness raising memory game to be distributed to Arabic Speaking children who returned to school this year in the province of Ontario.

In partnership with UNICEF Syria, the game aimed at spreading awareness on COVID-19 through recreation by matching elements in various ways (shapes, pictures, colours & numbers) while providing awareness messages on COVID-19 symptoms, hand washing tips, precautions and infection prevention.



## **NATAWASAL: DIGITAL SKILLS FOR SENIORS PROJECT**

This project connected Arabic speaking newcomer seniors to the digital world and services through an intergenerational volunteer model where youth volunteers were paired with senior participants to deliver technology orientations in Arabic. The seniors themselves were involved in all strategy and decision making activities in relation to the program and its curricula.



# WOMEN'S PROGRAMMING



## HER STARTUP PHASE 2

Over the past year, the Syrian Canadian Foundation (SCF) successfully completed Phase 1 of HER Startup in partnership with Jumpstart Refugee Talent through outreach and client intake. This unique program offers refugee women an entrepreneurship program that empowers them to build their startup and propel them to success.

Phase 2 will provide training in communication, help with access to seed funding, mentorship and training to help refugee women develop entrepreneurial skills and understand how to launch their own business ideas in Canada.



## SAWA WELLNESS PROGRAM

"Sawa" is our virtual wellness program for Arabic-speaking newcomer women living in the Halton Region (Oakville, Milton, Burlington, and Halton Hills). The program promotes the development of new skills, a safe space for sharing experiences and making friends while engaging in activities and fruitful discussions. Participants also learn about stress management, parenting, and self-care.



# RESEARCH PROJECTS



## Syrian Canadian Experiences

Syrians have been migrating to Canada for over 100 years, yet rarely have Syrian-Canadian views and perspectives been the main focus in research. To change this, SCF partnered with York University, the University of California (USA), and McMaster University under the direction of Dr. Christopher Kyriakides, who is the Canadian Research Chair in Citizenship, Social Justice, and Ethno-Racialization at York University, Canada to compare the experiences of Syrian-Canadians to Syrian-Americans.

The purpose of this research project is to understand the experiences of Syrian Canadians and Americans, motivate future goals of local organizations and inform local, national and regional government policy.





# "A NEW HOME IN CANADA"



## 5 Year Anniversary of Welcoming Syrian Refugees in Canada

Five years ago, the first flight of Syrian refugees fleeing civil war was welcomed to Canada. We witnessed the excitement, chaos, and relief that filled the Toronto Plaza Hotel as thousands of Syrian refugees made temporary homes out of hotel rooms and turned hallways into soccer fields. This anniversary also marked the beginning of the Syrian Canadian Foundation's journey. To celebrate, we hosted a virtual celebration, "A New Home in Canada" on ZOOM. We had a fantastic evening connecting with inspiring speakers, enjoyed live performances, and had the opportunity to honor community champions. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau shared the link to our Livestream and we were able to reach 415,000 people as well as 144,000 views on our Livestream!



# OUR 2021 IMPACT

## EDUCATION

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### ENGLISH TUTORING PROGRAM

**22**

REGISTERED STUDENTS

**48**

GROUP SESSIONS

### NATAWASAL

**30**

PARTICIPANTS

**13**

TUTORS

## WOMEN'S PROGRAMMING

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### HER STARTUP

**1**

INCUBATOR  
LEAD BY 5 FEMALE FOUNDERS

**25**

WORKSHOPS

### SAWA WOMEN'S WELLNESS PROGRAM

**7**

VOLUNTEERS

## YOUTH PROGRAMMING

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### FLASH FORWARD PHOTOVOICE

**21**

PARTICIPANTS

**4**

IN-PERSON SESSIONS

**17**

VIRTUAL EVENTS



# COMMUNITY INITIATIVES



## Virtual Social Justice & Art Cafe

We partnered with BAM - Books Art Music Collective on creative monthly sessions for racialized youth to discuss social justice issues while engaging with professional guest speakers and enjoying arts. This project is funded by the Ryerson Office of Social Innovation. **(2021)**

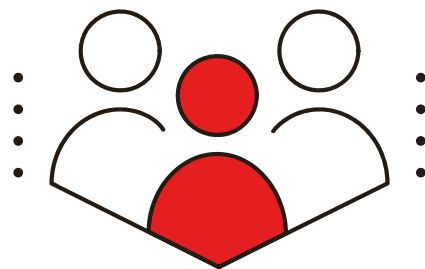
## Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program

SCF Hosted this program to promote positive parenting, increase parent's understanding of children's health, safety and behaviour, help parents build on the skills, increase self-help and mutual support, and help prevent family violence **(2021)**

**Women Who Inspire:** SCF sponsored the "Women Who Inspire" (WWI) virtual event on November 14, 2021. This initiative was launched by the Canadian Council of Muslim Women in 2007 to recognize Canadian Muslim women who have made a difference in the lives of other people in Canada and/or abroad. **(2021)**

## Bridging the Gap—A Conversation between Newcomers and Indigenous Youth

We collaborated with BAM - Books Art Music Collective on a virtual conversation between Newcomers and Indigenous Youth. This conversation introduced newcomers to Canadian history and empowered youth to stand together against racism, discrimination, and injustices—making a contribution toward healing as a community and as a country. The conversation has been funded by the Laidlaw Foundation. **(2021)**



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**El Far3i Live in Toronto:** SCF sponsored the "El Far3i Live" in Toronto in November 2021 which was hosted by Jokermail Productions & Henna Platform. El Far3i is Palestinian and Jordanian songwriter who enmeshes Arab acoustic folk and hip-hop in his music. The event took place at Parkdale hall in Toronto. **(2021)**

## **Senators and Youth Engagement Event**

In September 2021, SCF collaborated with Senate of Canada - Sénat du Canada and the Politics and Governance at Ryerson University on the Senators and Youth Engagement Virtual Event. Senator Ratna Omidvar, Senator Salma Ataullahjan and Senator Marilou McPhedran joined to share their inspirational stories, their experiences at the Senate, and their role in connecting with youth and supporting underrepresented communities. Our youth had the opportunity to connect with the Senators, ask questions, network and more! **(2021)**



SENATE  
SÉNAT  
CANADA



SENGAGE  
Senators Engaging Youth



SYRIAN CANADIAN  
FOUNDATION

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**BAYAN KHATIB**



**MUSTAFA ALIO**



**HUDA ALSARRAJ**



**MALAZ SEBAI**



**RUBY LATIF**



**FATEMA DADA**



**FATHI ABU FARAH**

# OUR TEAM

## EMPLOYEES



**MARWA KHOBIEH**  
Interim Executive Director



**NEELOFER TARIQ**  
Project Manager



**RAMI CHAMSEDDINE**  
Project Manager



**HANEN NANAA**  
Outreach Coordinator



**RAYAN BATLOUNI**  
Project Coordinator



**HAZAR NAJJAR**  
Project Coordinator



# OUR TEAM

## EMPLOYEES



**DIANA COLANGELO**

Administrative Assistant



**YARA TAWIL**

Project Coordinator



**SARAH SILK**

Graphic Designer



**JUSTINE ALMIRA**

Social Media Coordinator



**ELY BAHHADI**

Community Engagement



**ZAINAB ABU ALROB PHD (C)**

Researcher & Project Coordinator





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