



Photo: Krista Ewert





# The **Kinbrace** community welcomes refugee claimants with housing, education, and support.



The posture of welcome is hidden in plain sight:

## **kinship + embrace**

2023 marks 25 years sharing kinship and embrace with refugee claimants.



## Thank you

Kinbrace's dream comes to life moment by moment thanks to the generosity of people with lived refugee claimant experience, donors, funders, volunteers, neighbours, host community, and staff.

Our dream for each refugee claimant is a world of welcome, a community of belonging, and a life of opportunity.



Masi Allahverdi, Ready Tour Organizer, joined the Kinbrace staff team in 2022. Here, with her partner, she enjoys the campfire at the summer camp on Anvil Island.



Photo: Krista Ewert



Photo: Krista Ewert

The 2022 expedition to find the perfect Kinbrace Christmas tree at the Fernridge Christmas Tree Forest!

# Message from the Board of Directors



This year marks 25 years of kinship and embrace with refugee claimants. The Board wants to thank donors, sponsors, staff, host families, volunteers, and neighbours alike who, across 25 years, welcomed 678 forcibly displaced families/individuals seeking refugee protection in Canada through the transitional housing community, and tens of thousands more with public legal education and information.

People seeking refuge are much more than numbers. Still the numbers confirm the necessity of our work. In 2022, 91,760 refugee claims were made in Canada. By comparison, in 1998 when Kinbrace first opened its doors, there were 25,000 refugee claims. Rather than letting these statistics overwhelm us, the Kinbrace community finds energy and life by attending to each person seeking protection that comes through our doors.

Achieving our vision where “each refugee claimant experiences a world of welcome, a community of belonging, and a life of opportunity” lays the foundation for security that benefits us all. Fulfilling our mission of providing housing, education and support begins the path toward self-sufficiency. Everyone who participates diligently and contributes generously works to fulfill Kinbrace’s mission and vision.



This year, the Board made strides into the 2020 – 2030 strategic vision: Inspiring transformative communities where refugee claimants and Canadians flourish together. Successes include:

- Moving towards the development of further housing via the K3 project
- Launching the My Refugee Claim resources
- Launching the Transforming Employment Narratives project
- Launching the Becoming Neighbours Workshops
- Launching the Kinbrace Educational Award

Entering the next fiscal year, we are grateful for the multitude of people who make Kinbrace’s work possible. Each contribution—knowledge, time, or money, large or small—increases refugee claimants’ experience of welcome, belonging, and opportunity.

With deepest gratitude,

Maria Zerjav  
Chairperson



Photo: Loren Balisky

(left to right) Natasha Wallace (Treasurer), Sadiq Mohibi, Randall Cohn, Rosemary Toye, Ray Fung, Maria Zerjav (Chairperson), not pictured: Erin Goheen Glanville (Secretary)





# Meet My Family. Hear Our Story.



(left to right) Hamed, Hami, Hani, Behnaz. After two months of hardship and living in different places upon arrival in Canada, this family received transitional housing in the Kinbrace community, and eventually found permanent housing and meaningful employment.

This is my family: my husband Hamed, our sons Hami and Hani, and me (Behnaz).

We entered Canada on June 17, 2022 and asked for asylum. On August 19, 2022, after two months of hardship and living in different places, we entered Kinbrace and got an apartment. I can never write the feeling because words cannot describe it properly. Although it was temporary, it was a house that felt safe and calm the moment we entered. A house that I named "my father's house."



For me and my family, who once owned a house, car, money and everything that a good life has in our country, Iran, and we had to leave them, we experienced very difficult moments until we reached Kinbrace. Many times during the two months that we were like displaced people, we felt like dying when I looked at the innocent faces of my two children; I could no longer even hear their laughter.

But, we now had shelter and people around us who lovingly supported us moment by moment to make us feel better.

We lived in Kinbrace for six months, my children came back to life and that is the greatest wish of every parent. They played freely in the yard and even in the office of Kinbrace, and the members of Kinbrace loved them and played with them.

I will never forget the day when I was crying unexpectedly and asking God for help, one of the Kinbrace employees knocked on the door and said I should go to the office. I couldn't believe that they had provided me with a sewing machine, thread, iron, fabric, etc. Just a few days prior I had told them about my tailoring business in Iran, and it was like coming back to life for me. I could work again.

One of the most beautiful events that happened in Kinbrace every week was the Tuesday dinner. Even though it's been several months since we left, my boys remember every Tuesday all the families get together and have dinner.

Families are there from every nationality and every language, but they have a great time together every Tuesday.

Kinbrace made a resume for me and helped me get a job. I would love to write a short sentence about the owner of the company I work for, but I can never describe him in one sentence, people like him should be written for hours. He is a man with a big heart. He is very generous and unsurpassed in helping. He accepted me kindly from the first day. When we rented a house and he realized that my children didn't have beds, he bought them with the help of his friend. They came to our house on moving day and prepared the beds. This was wonderful. His wife brought us dinner and it was incredible. He has been by our side many times in the problems that have happened to my family, from taking Hamed to the hospital to keeping the children in his own home and playing with them. So I can't find any words to describe this great man. I can only say that I can never forget his kindness.

We found a house and I can't even describe my landlord. I still can't believe that such angels live on earth. They are of Indian origin. They have a very big heart. The house we rented was not furnished, but when they heard the story of our life, they



Photo: Krista Ewert

Hani comes to life in the snow!



Behnaz and Hamed, with sons Hami and Hani, participated in Kinbrace's 2022 Ride for Refuge. Thanks to their effort, the help of 237 other riders and walkers, and the generosity of 1219 donors, over \$122,000 was raised to provide ongoing housing and support for refugee claimants.

Photo: Mark Janousek

equipped the house with new things for us and even arranged it. They even prepared books, notebooks and toys for the children. When they saw that my children were interested in the playground, they emptied a corner of the garden of flowers and told us that this is the children's play area and they even clean it for the children once in a while.

I may never be able to write in detail what Kinbrace gave us, but I can only say that the Kinbrace community brought me and my family to life. It gave us back the sense of being human and having the right to live. We were able to stand on our feet again and continue. I don't know what would have happened to my family if it wasn't for them, but I do know that if we are working now and hope to regain in the future all the things we lost, we owe it all to Kinbrace.

In the end, I know that the Kinbrace community is not alone and there are many kind hearts that help so that no family is helpless. I don't know any of these benefactors but I love them and I kiss and appreciate each and every one of them. I hope that one day there will be people who will help Kinbrace to create housing, because the biggest challenge for people like us after entering Kinbrace is first to find a job and then to find a house. Even in a city where even if you have work and life experience, finding a house is still a big challenge.

# Impact by numbers



## HOUSING AND WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT FOR REFUGEE CLAIMANTS IN VANCOUVER, BC:

**84** new arrivals and former residents received wrap-around support. Of these:

**49** received transitional housing (cf. 42 in 2021–2022)

**35** moved from transitional housing into permanent housing (cf. 28 in 2021–2022)

## PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION AND INFORMATION FOR REFUGEE CLAIMANTS EVERYWHERE IN CANADA:

**13,244** users accessed the new My Refugee Claim website (launched 12 Oct 2022). These users made:

**59,198** page views

**1,486** downloads of the Orientation Booklet

**560** registrations for the Ready Tour

**New!**

## Kinbrace Educational Award

The Kinbrace Educational Award supports the post-secondary educational aspirations of one foreign-born young person who made a refugee claim in Canada (or whose parents made a refugee claim) and is now a protected person, permanent resident, or Canadian citizen.

This \$5,000 annual award may be renewed yearly for the recipient, for a total award of \$20,000 over four consecutive years.

This new award launched thanks to the inspiration and generosity of several donors who came together to envision a strong future for young people impacted by forced displacement.

The dream is to grow this award so more young people can benefit each year.

Kinbrace expresses gratitude to MOSAIC, for hosting the Kinbrace Educational Award application process.





# Welcome back Summer Camp!

(GOODBYE GLOBAL PANDEMIC)

\*\*

The Kinbrace community happily returned to the warm embrace of Daybreak Camp (Anvil Island) in June 2022, after missing summer camps 2020 and 2021 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Thanks (again!) to Elizabeth Smith and her family and friends who volunteered to cook, and to the generous donors who made the camp possible!



Having survived the isolation and physical distance of the global pandemic for two years, Kinbrace community members celebrated being back together for the 24–26 June 2022 annual Anvil Island camp.

# Systems Transformation and Culture Change

## Becoming Neighbours



Graphic Recording: Yolanda Liman, *Drawing It Out*

## BECOMING NEIGHBOURS

Becoming Neighbours Workshops explore time-tested values that lead to belonging and safety in a world increasingly marked by forced displacement. These free, interactive (in-person and virtual) Workshops aim to strengthen and share participants' capacities for creating a world of welcome amid forced displacement. An initiative of the Beyond Refuge Program, workshops Welcome and Mutual Transformation were hosted this fiscal year with 165 Canadians and people with lived refugee experience participating.

In partnership with Worn Words Media and funded by Vancity, Vancouver Foundation, UBC Office of Community Engagement, and UBC Centre for Migration Studies.



Website

## TRANSFORMING EMPLOYMENT NARRATIVES

This year, the Achieving Financial Mobility initiative focused on the new Transforming Employment Narratives (TEN) program. This pilot professional development program and ideas incubator targets the employment system, an early-stages effort at system change. TEN will build awareness, understanding of barriers refugee claimants face, and empathy – all crucial as we collectively envision and start building solutions with and for the flourishing of refugee claimants and employers. Learn more at [www.transformingemploymentnarratives.ca](http://www.transformingemploymentnarratives.ca).

In partnership with Camille Dumond and Jorge Salazar and funded by WES Mariam Assefa Fund, Vancity, and SPARCBC.



Website

Orientation Booklet

Ready Tours

## MY REFUGEE CLAIM

My Refugee Claim resources (website + Ready Tours + Orientation Booklet) inform, connect, and prepare refugee claimants throughout their refugee claim journey. The website and Orientation Booklet launched in October 2022, built on the success of the Refugee Hearing Preparation Guide (2010–2020). Ready Tours are long established (2008), and this year we started to transition them from a regional to a national offer. Our goal, by the end of 2024, is to reach 95% of refugee claimants arriving in Canada with online and in-print resources in their preferred language.

In partnership with dozens of national and regional partners and funded by the Law Foundations of Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario, The Notary Foundation of BC, The Houssian Foundation, UNHCR, and Legal Aid BC.



## CHALLENGES FACED BY KINBRACE DURING THE YEAR



- Increasing rental rates and low vacancies made finding permanent housing an even more desperate challenge. Refugee claimants moving from Kinbrace spent at least 70% of their income on rent. In 1998, a one bedroom apartment in Vancouver cost ~\$600/month; in 2023, the same one bedroom apartment cost ~\$2,500/month.
- Demand for orientation to the refugee hearing process strained the current manual registration process for Ready Tours. We budgeted capacity to manage 700 registrations, and more than 900 people registered.
- As residents move further away because of Metro Vancouver's housing crisis, they are becoming more disconnected from the Kinbrace community.
- Inflation significantly impacted cost of operations. The biggest increase was on salaries for staff, providing cost of living increases to match inflation.



Two Kinbrace residents successfully pull the annual Christmas tree homeward, despite obstacles.



## LESSONS LEARNED & CORRECTIONS MADE



We continually work to improve our welcome and support of refugee claimant residents. Going forward, we will switch from a program-based model to a settlement case management model. Since 2019 we have been testing the program-based model, where residents work with multiple staff across various programs (housing, employment, wellness, refugee protection). Feedback from residents indicated this approach was not serving their needs.

With the case management approach, each family will work with a specific staff person (in their preferred language if possible) for all their settlement needs.

We believe this will

- reduce confusion residents currently have about who is helping them with what,
- reduce our dependence on translation apps that at times has caused misunderstandings and hurt, and
- allow the team to support residents from a relational approach.

Transitioning to this new model will happen in 2023–2024.

# Kinbrace Staff



(left to right) (standing): Mohammed Zaqout, Derek Chu, Masi Allahverdi, Laura Wallis-Wood, Ebenezer Joshua, Thariki | (sitting): Loren Balisky, Adriana Zepeda, Chantel Spade, Julie DeMelo  
Not pictured: Luke Greidanus

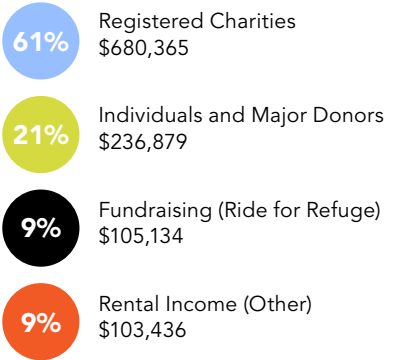
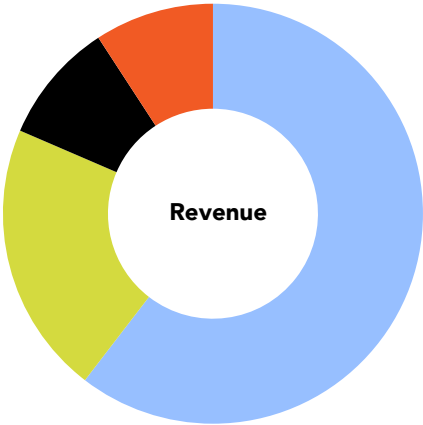
# Kinbrace Host Community



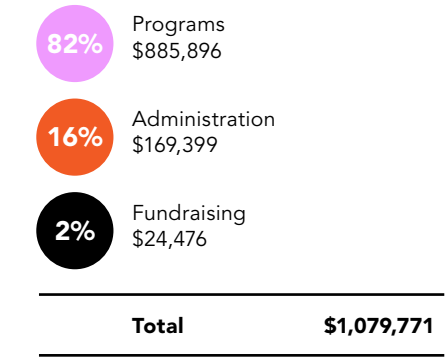
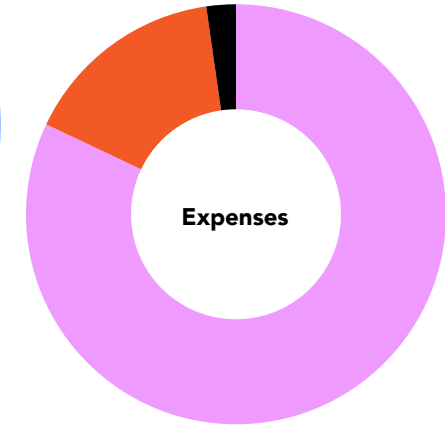
(left to right) Anjali Mishra, Ewert Family (Ella, Audrey, Ben, Jakob, Krista), Kavanagh Family (Rachel, Ben, Graeme)

# Financials

2022 – 2023



Kinbrace's fiscal year is May–April.



# Kinbrace's five core values

## **WELCOME**

We are in solidarity: bearing witness to exile, we live with refugee claimants.

## **TRUST**

We are a community: affirming dignity, we commit to the best in one another.

## **MUTUAL TRANSFORMATION**

We are diverse: striving to listen well, we learn and grow.

## **CELEBRATION**

We are grateful: amidst joy and sorrow, we discover hope.

## **PRAYER**

We are sojourners: held by grace, we journey into the mystery and love of God.



REFUGEE HOUSING & SUPPORT

21732-1424 Commercial Drive | Vancouver BC | V5L 5G3  
Office: 604-255-9691 | E-mail: [info@kinbrace.ca](mailto:info@kinbrace.ca)

Kinbrace Community Society is incorporated in British Columbia (S0058365) and charitably registered by Canada Revenue Agency (80276 4209 RR0001).

**[kinbrace.ca](http://kinbrace.ca)**