

## UNAC

### *Teachers Guide: Refugees: A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE*

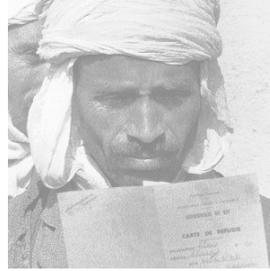
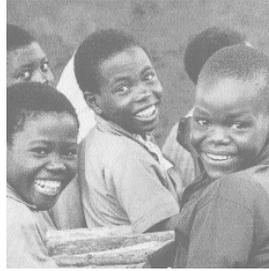


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# refugees:

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A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE



# refugees:

## A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

**Welcome.** This teacher’s guide contains basic facts, stories, and activity ideas to assist you in introducing the topic of refugees into your classroom, whether in social studies, history, geography or other lessons. It explains who refugees are, the concepts of asylum and international protection, what Canada is doing for refugees and, lastly, how students can take action to raise awareness and help refugees in their communities. This guide points you towards other useful classroom-ready teaching resources, most of which are available free of charge. These materials are described in the accompanying *Catalogue of Teaching Resources*.

**Teaching about refugees is important.** For many young Canadians, refugee issues are distant and abstract. It is easy to grow up without a clear understanding of what causes people to become refugees, and why some come to Canada. This guide is based on the premise that educating young people about refugees and the new perspectives they bring with them helps to build a welcoming, inclusive society.

**By studying refugee issues, your students will gain:**

- > an understanding of the root causes which force refugees to flee their countries;
- > an understanding of the difference between refugees and immigrants;
- > an ability to recognize and counter negative stereotypes;
- > an understanding of Canada’s refugee policies at home and abroad;
- > an appreciation of how national and international laws strive to protect the rights of refugees; and
- > an understanding of the concepts of justice and equality, and a sense of personal responsibility for defending human rights.

**Your curriculum** has many links to refugee issues. Although social studies is the most obvious fit, many subjects can be viewed from a refugee perspective, including world issues, history, geography, law, language arts, political science and media studies. For detailed curriculum links, and for further lesson plans relating to these subjects, please refer to the enclosed *Catalogue* and the teacher’s section on UNHCR’s website at [www.unhcr.ch/teach/teach.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/teach/teach.htm).

**You don't need to be an expert to teach about refugees.** Few of us have had an opportunity to study about refugee issues. Provided you have a general interest in the subject, you don't have to have all the answers. You just have to be willing to learn with your students.

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# who ARE REFUGEES?

As defined in the UN's *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, a **refugee** is a person who has left his or her country and cannot return because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group.

**Persecution** means sustained and systematic violation of basic human rights.

**Human rights** are those rights that belong to every individual simply because he or she is a human being. They set out the basic standards which allow people to live in dignity. (See the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* at [www.unhchr.ch](http://www.unhchr.ch))

War and **persecution** force people to flee their homes in many parts of the world. Refugees leave their countries because their basic **human rights** have been violated or are in jeopardy. Persecution may be for a variety of reasons, such as political opinion, ethnicity or religious belief. Refugees cannot count on protection from their own government, including the police and the courts. Their only option is to seek safety in another country.

An **internally displaced person** is similar in many ways to a refugee, but has not crossed an international border. Internally displaced persons flee within their own countries because of war, human rights violations or natural disasters. There are more internally displaced persons in the world today than there are refugees.

## REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS

Refugees leave their countries to escape from war or persecution. They cannot safely return home, and cannot count on their government to protect their basic rights. Immigrants choose to leave their countries voluntarily to make a new life elsewhere. They can return home at any time, and can still count on the protection of their own government.

## Activity: Trapped in School

### GOAL

*To have students relate to how it would feel to have their basic rights abused.*

### SITUATION

Following a series of burglaries in the neighbourhood, some witnesses have reported to the police that youth of the age range in your classroom and from your school were involved. No arrests were made, but the police have agreed with the school administration that all students of your grade level will be confined to the classroom every day after school for the rest of the school year. Any student found not complying with this regulation will be expelled.

## ASK YOUR CLASS

How do they feel about this decision? What actions would they take? Some students might suggest an all-out strike, taking legal action or alerting the media to their plight. Next, present them with a situation where there are no legal remedies, as their rights are not protected. The student who led the strike was arrested and jailed without trial. The main newspaper that covered the story with a sympathetic editorial was shut down. There is no other option but to accept the regulation or be expelled. Which would they choose? Have them explain their choice. Encourage the students to draw analogies to the plight of people who risk persecution and become refugees.

## Corresponding Resources

For further details and information on how to order, please refer to enclosed *Catalogue of Teaching Resources*.

### TEACHERS' GUIDES

- > *Human Rights, Refugees and UNHCR*: Unit Plan for ages 12-14; specifically lessons 3-5
- > *To Be a Refugee* (with video)
- > *Passages and Junior Passages*; specifically “Separation Activity” and “Crossing the Border Activity”

### RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

- > *Refugee Teenagers*
- > *Refugee Children*
- > *Refugees by Numbers*; specifically “Who does UNHCR Help and How”

### BROCHURES

- > *Facing Facts: Myths and Misconceptions about Refugees*
- > *Refugees Magazine*
- > *Helping Refugees: An Introduction to UNHCR*

### WEB RESOURCES

- > Geography Unit Plan for ages 9-11, from [www.unhcr.ch/teach/teach.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/teach/teach.htm)
- > History Unit Plan for ages 9-11, from [www.unhcr.ch/teach/teach.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/teach/teach.htm)



# asylum

## AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

**Asylum** is the protection offered to someone fleeing persecution in another country. An **asylum-seeker** is a person who has crossed an international border and applies for protection as a refugee in another country. Many countries, like Canada, have special procedures to decide whether an asylum-seeker is a refugee to whom protection should be granted. In Canada, asylum-seekers are known as refugee claimants.

*“Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”*

Article 14, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The UNHCR extends **international protection** to refugees who do not enjoy the protection of their home country. This means that the UNHCR ensures that refugees receive asylum, that they are not forcibly returned to a country where persecution is feared and that their social and economic rights are respected in their country of asylum.

The right to seek and enjoy **asylum** in another country is a basic human right. Refugees seek asylum because they can no longer remain safely in their own countries. The most important feature of asylum is protection from being forcibly sent back to a country where a refugee's life or freedom would be in danger. This forced return is known as *refoulement*. *Non-refoulement* is a rule of international law which stipulates that no person may be returned against his or her will to a country where his or her life or freedom would be in danger.

It is important for countries of asylum to respect refugees' basic rights. Refugees need shelter, food, clean water and health care. Refugee children need to go to school, and their parents should have the right to work. Economic and social rights apply to refugees as they do to all other individuals. Respecting refugees' basic rights means enabling them to live normal lives.

The *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* is a UN treaty which has been ratified by around 140 countries, including Canada. The Convention defines who is a refugee, establishes the principle of *non-refoulement* and sets out basic refugee rights, which states are bound to respect. Prior to this Convention, there were no international guarantees for refugees. Many people who fled their homes did not survive, because other countries would not take them in.

The **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** is the organization that has been given the task of protecting and helping the world's refugees. The UNHCR strives:

- > to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees;
- > to ensure that refugees are not sent back to a country where they would be in danger; and
- > to find solutions by assisting refugees to return home or settle in a country of asylum.

**Resettlement** is the organized movement of refugees from camps or other temporary situations to another country where they can reside on a permanent basis. Resettlement to another country may be the only way to guarantee protection of a refugee who is at risk of forcible return or who faces other serious problems.

**Voluntary Repatriation** is the return of refugees to their home countries, of their own free will, once conditions have become safe. The UNHCR helps refugees to return home, arranging for transportation and providing them with basic assistance to get back on their feet.

Persons who have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity or other serious non-political crimes are considered not deserving of international protection and are therefore excluded from refugee status.

## Activity: Illegal Tunes

### GOAL

*To have students understand why asylum is a fundamental human right.*

### SITUATION

A new principal has taken over at your school and outlawed all forms of music. A search has been conducted of your students' lockers and desks; CDs, tapes and musical instruments were discovered and confiscated. Some students from another class have already been taken away and are said to be in jail. Your students manage to escape to another school, but they are turned away because it is already full. They try their luck at a third school and are informed that they may enter, but must leave everything behind except the clothes on their backs.

### ASK YOUR CLASS

How do they feel? What did they think when they were turned away from the first school? Do they want to go back to their old school? What do they expect from their new school? What will be the most difficult part of adjusting? What do they miss? Encourage them to draw analogies between their situation and the situation of refugees.

## Corresponding Resources

For further details and information on how to order, please refer to enclosed *Catalogue of Teaching Resources*.

### TEACHERS' GUIDES

> *Human Rights, Refugees and UNHCR*, Unit Plan ages 15-18, lessons 1,2,3,5

### RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

- > *Refugee Teenagers*
- > *Refugee Children*; specifically pp. 16-26 "Finding Safety and Shelter."
- > *Today's Children* (six elementary level books with a teacher's guide available at cost)

### BROCHURES

- > *Protecting Refugees: Questions and Answers*
- > *Refugees Magazine*
- > *Helping Refugees: An Introduction to UNHCR*

### WEB RESOURCES:

- > [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)
- > [www.refugees.org](http://www.refugees.org)
- > [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)



# Canada

## AND REFUGEES

Canada has a long history of helping refugees at home and abroad. However, there have also been some very dark moments in our history. One of those moments occurred in June of 1939. A ship called the St. Louis, filled with 900 desperate Jewish refugees fleeing the horror of Nazi Germany, was turned away by the United States. Seeing Canada as its last hope the ship sought refuge here, but Canada also said no. The St. Louis and its terrified passengers were forced to return to Europe. Only a handful survived.

Canada has learned from the grave consequences of denying asylum to those fleeing persecution. Since the Second World War, Canada has offered a new home to more than 700,000 refugees. In 1969, Canada ratified the *1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*. This signified Canada's formal commitment to identifying and protecting refugees in Canada, and making sure that their basic rights are respected.

### The Nansen Refugee Award

In 1986, UNHCR awarded its prestigious Nansen Refugee Award (formerly, the Nansen Medal) to the people of Canada, in recognition of their "major and sustained contribution to the cause of refugees." It was the first time a country as a whole was awarded this medal, named after Fridtjof Nansen, who won a Nobel Peace Prize for his refugee work in the aftermath of World War I.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) is the main federal government department responsible for resettlement and integration of refugees in Canada. The Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), an independent tribunal, is responsible for deciding whether refugee claimants who arrive in Canada by their own means are entitled to refugee status.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) provides humanitarian aid to refugees overseas through the UNHCR and numerous other organizations, including UNICEF, the World Food Programme, the Red Cross and Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs). CIDA gives high priority to overseas projects which support peace-building initiatives, war-affected children and refugee women. Canadian peacekeepers help people affected by war in many parts of the world. Ordinary Canadians also directly support NGOs abroad which provide assistance to refugees and work to address the root causes of refugee flight.

NGOs, faith communities, community groups and individuals throughout Canada help refugees in many practical ways. NGOs are important advocates for the rights of refugees, and help to influence government policy to make sure that refugees in Canada receive fair treatment. Canadians also directly assist thousands of refugees through sponsorship programs.

### REFUGEES COME TO CANADA IN TWO WAYS:

1. Some arrive as *asylum-seekers* (or *refugee claimants*). These are people who make their own way to Canada and apply for refugee status when they arrive or after they have entered Canada.
2. Others are selected overseas by Canadian visa officers and offered resettlement in Canada.

### REFUGEE CLAIMANTS

The IRB is responsible for deciding whether refugee claimants are entitled to protection in Canada. They use the refugee definition contained in the 1951 Refugee Convention (see page 2) and must hear each applicant individually. Roughly half of the claims are decided positively.

## RESETTLED REFUGEES

Canadian immigration officials posted abroad select refugees for resettlement to Canada. These are men, women and children who either cannot remain safely in the country where they first sought asylum or who have close family ties in Canada. Many resettled refugees receive assistance from the federal or Quebec provincial government, while others are helped by private sponsors, including individual Canadians, faith communities or groups of concerned citizens.

### The Singh Decision

Canadians mark April 4th as Refugee Rights Day. On this date in 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada handed down a landmark ruling which has become known as the “Singh Decision.” The case involved seven refugee claimants from India who were not allowed an oral hearing. Their application for refugee status was rejected and they appealed to the Supreme Court. The Court ruled that refugee claimants in Canada deserve the same standard of justice under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as Canadian citizens, and are entitled to a fair hearing. This decision paved the way for the creation of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) in 1989.

### Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

The Charter protects the fundamental rights and freedoms of all people in Canada, and sets out specific rights of Canadian citizens. The rights contained in the Charter are considered essential to preserving Canada as a free and democratic country — first and foremost, the right to life, liberty and security of the person. The Singh Decision is an example of how the Charter affects refugees. The basis of our Charter stems from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## Activity 1: Making the Decision

### GOAL

*To give students an overview of Canada's refugee determination system.*

### SITUATION

The case studies below are examples of the dilemmas faced by the IRB when deciding whether someone is a refugee. Have the students work in groups to review the case study and answer the questions. Discuss their decisions. What was most difficult in making their determinations?

### CASE STUDY 1

Ms. H, who has no political affiliation, belongs to an ethnic minority, many members of which want independence from the ethnic majority governing her country. In support of their ideas, some members of the minority group have undertaken guerilla activities. Each time one of these guerilla actions took place, Ms. H was threatened by some of her neighbours, who belong to the ethnic majority. In addition, she received anonymous phone calls from members of her own ethnic group, who criticized her for not taking their side. She went to the police and asked for protection, but they were so overwhelmed by the events

**The Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB)** is an independent tribunal whose mission is “to make well-reasoned decisions on immigration and refugee matters efficiently, fairly and in accordance with the law.” (See [www.irb.gc.ca](http://www.irb.gc.ca))

**Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)** is the federal government department responsible for refugee and immigration issues. CIC has programmes which reunite families, help protect and resettle refugees, admit immigrants with particular labour market skills and promote acquisition and understanding of the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship. CIC also implements and enforces Canadian immigration legislation. (See [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca))

**The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)** is a non-profit umbrella organization committed to the rights and protection of refugees in Canada and around the world and to the settlement of refugees and immigrants in Canada. The membership is made up of organizations involved in the settlement, sponsorship and protection of refugees and immigrants. (See [www.web.net/~ccr](http://www.web.net/~ccr))



that they could not help her. Tension grew in Ms. H's country, and many people were killed in clashes. Three members of Ms. H's family were killed and the perpetrators were never identified. Frightened, Ms. H obtained a passport, left her country by plane, and arrived in Canada, where she is now requesting asylum. Is Ms. H a refugee? Why or why not?

**Answer:** Although Ms. H was not involved in guerrilla activities, her neighbours still threatened her because she belongs to the minority ethnic group. In this case, her fear of persecution because of her ethnicity is well-founded. She is also in the position of being persecuted by certain members of her own ethnic group for not supporting the independence movement. In other words, her perceived political opinion (that is, not being involved at all) is at odds with others in her ethnic community. Her fear of persecution on political grounds is well-founded. She should be recognized as a refugee.

## CASE STUDY 2

Ms. F is a citizen of Magnolia. She has been suffering from a serious disease for the past three months. Her doctor believes that she only has a few more months left to live. Her only hope is a new, but very expensive, medical treatment. Unfortunately, Ms. F is very poor, and the Magnolian government has suspended all free health care services. All citizens are now required to pay the full cost of their medical care. Ms. F will never be able to afford the treatment that she needs to survive. However, in neighbouring Ruritania, health care is still subsidised by the government. If Ms. F is allowed into Ruritania, she is guaranteed free health care. With the help of a friend, Ms. F travels to the Ruritanian border and applies for refugee status. She claims that she will not survive if she remains in Magnolia. Do you think her application will be accepted? Why or why not?

**Answer:** Ms. F would not be recognised as a refugee. Poverty and poor social conditions alone are not grounds for granting asylum. To be considered a refugee under the 1951 Refugee Convention, there must be a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Ms. F is not being persecuted for any of these reasons. Although Ms. F belongs to the lower class, her membership of this social group is not in itself enough to be recognised as a refugee. There has to be some threat of persecution for belonging to this particular group. In this case, the government health care policy applies to everyone. No one is being disproportionately mistreated because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. However, if the government refused to provide medical treatment to Ms. F because of her ethnicity, then she might be a refugee.

**Comment:** Even though Ms. F did not meet the refugee definition, hers is a compelling humanitarian case. Many refused refugee claimants, such as Ms. F, apply in good faith believing that they are refugees, and although their story may not be one of persecution, they face other threats and personal hardships.

## Activity 2: A New Home

(Adapted from UNHCR’s Publication “Passages,” Activity 3)

### GOAL

*To help students appreciate the challenges faced by newcomers.*

### SITUATION

Divide the students into ‘families;’ each family is given a different color armband. Blindfold the participants and gently guide the members of the families away from each other. Throughout the separation, have people blow whistles, shout, and create noise. Following this, give the participants a short amount of time to find their family members. The less time, the more stress and anxiety will be created. Throughout their search, keep making noise, have people obstruct the family members’ movement, and give false directions to people searching for each other. After the family members have joined each other, have the students remove their blindfolds and have them seek an area designated as their home in their “new country;” the students will not know where these areas are and must rely on the directions of others. Have people ignore them when they ask for directions, or give them false directions again. After confusion and frustration has set in, have one person smile and welcome them, giving them the right directions and showing them to their “homes.” Once the scenes have been acted out, ask the students why they behaved the way they did, and how they thought the newcomers felt. What could they have done to help them feel at home?

## Corresponding Resources

For further details and information on how to place an order, please refer to enclosed *Catalogue of Teaching Resources*

### TEACHERS' GUIDES AND VIDEOS

- > *Human Rights, Refugees and UNHCR*, Unit Plan ages 15-18; specifically lesson 4
- > *Passages and Junior Passages*
- > *To Feel at Home*; specifically pp. 31-41— Section 3 “Making a New Life”
- > *Journey of Hope* (video)
- > *Belonging*
- > *Strangers Becoming Us*

### RESOURCES AT COST

- > *A Scattering of Seeds*
- > *Destination Canada Multimedia Kit*
- > *A Hundred Years of Immigration to Canada*

### BROCHURES

- > *Protecting Refugees: Questions and Answers*
- > *Refugees Magazine*

### WEB RESOURCES

- > [www.web.net/~ccr](http://www.web.net/~ccr)
- > [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)
- > [www.irb.gc.ca](http://www.irb.gc.ca)



## Our Stories

*The following stories are real life accounts of refugees living in Canada. The first is the story of a family resettled to Canada from overseas. The second is that of a person who claimed refugee status after arriving at Canada's border.*

### JAWHAR SULTAN, TORONTO, ONTARIO

The expression “out of the frying pan and into the fire” aptly describes how Jawhar Sultan and her family felt when they arrived as refugees in Moscow after fleeing their native Afghanistan.

Moscow was not considered a safe place for a person like Jawhar, who remembers how the Russian army invaded Afghanistan in an attempt to take control of the country. However, Moscow was the nearest place Jawhar and her family could reach when they fled their homeland.

Afghanistan has been at war for the last 20 years. Many innocent people like the Sultans have been caught in the crossfire as each new regime tries to punish anyone connected to the old, even if those connections are tenuous at best.

Although Jawhar's family did not have any connection to the former communist regime, they were still under suspicion, and several of Jawhar's relatives were killed. Fearing for her life and the lives of her husband and five young children, Jawhar and her family escaped to the relative safety of Moscow as fast as they could.

But Moscow was not the salvation they had hoped. The war between the two countries had created a lot of bad blood, and the police were constantly harassing Afghan people like Jawhar.

Desperate to find a country that would help her start a new life, Jawhar applied to many embassies. Although she would go anywhere, she secretly hoped she would end up in Canada because a friend who had already escaped there had sent her letters telling her what a wonderful and peaceful place it was to live.

Jawhar was in Russia for five years, and the last three were spent organizing her papers and trying to connect with a sponsor. Finally, she got in touch with Toronto's Afghan Women's Counselling and Integration Community Support Organization, who agreed to sponsor her once they made sure that she was indeed not connected to the communist party and its activities.

“Her story touched our hearts,” says Adeena Niazi of the organization. “At first, her case was not a priority, but then she sent us a picture of her children and told us about the hard life they were living in the hands of their former enemy.”

“The staff got together to discuss it, and we all agreed that we wanted to help her,” Adeena explains.

While Jawhar was thrilled to learn of her acceptance in Canada, her share of tragedies was not yet over. Just as she got word that she had finally found a safe country to call home, her husband Kokar got food poisoning and died. Three Russian hospitals had refused to treat him because of his ethnic origin and his inability to pay.

Still, Jawhar was determined to give her children hope for the future, and so she pressed on to Canada as a single mother of five. The family breathed a collective sigh of relief as soon as the plane to Toronto left the Moscow airport in June 1998.

“I was very surprised by all the attention I received when I arrived,” says Jawhar, with the help of a translator. “I am grateful to the Afghan Women's Organization because they were so helpful. They spoke my language and helped me find an apartment, register for English training and get the kids into schools. They also showed us how to live from day to day in Canada.”

Jawhar did get a bit of a shock, however, when a fire alarm went off in the building she was living in during her first week in Canada. At first, she didn't know what was happening because there were so many flashing lights and so much noise coming from the fire trucks that responded to the call. Luckily, it was a false alarm, and Jawhar realized that, in Canada, all that noise and light does not mean people are coming to take you away.

Despite having only nine years of formal education and no work experience, Jawhar was determined to earn a living to support her family. An excellent seamstress, she was helped by the Women's Organization, who advertised her services. Now, she does tailoring for a group of regular clients.

She also takes English-language courses so that she can catch up with her children, who became fluent in English after only three months. Her eldest son helps out by splitting his time between taking courses and working at a part-time job. Someday, he hopes to have enough training to be a television technician.

The youngest child is in junior high school and wants to become a psychologist so that she can help others. The other three are doing very well in high school and are equally ambitious — one hopes to become a doctor, and the other two want to be a dentist and a journalist.

While learning English is difficult for Jawhar, the biggest challenge is being a single mother of five teenagers. “But this would be hard in any country,” says Jawhar. She's thrilled that her children now live in peace but worries, like any typical Canadian parent, about the drugs and violence in Toronto schools.

For the most part, however, Jawhar is very content with the way this stage of her life is unfolding. She sends messages to those left behind through friends in Pakistan, telling them how open, friendly and helpful Canadians are to her.

Although she may never be able to return to her homeland, Jawhar is happy. For the first time in more than 20 years, she can stop looking over her shoulder and start living her own life.

## ANGÉLIQUE

*The name and parts of the story have been changed to respect the confidentiality of the refugee claimant in Canada.*

Angélique is a member of the Tutsi minority ethnic group in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Her husband was a prominent human rights activist who was forced into hiding after the government ordered his arrest on charges of treason. Frustrated that her husband had eluded them, the security forces detained Angélique twice for interrogation. Each time she was repeatedly beaten and humiliated over a period of several weeks.

After her second release from detention, she knew that she could not survive another round of interrogation and decided to flee with her children. Unfortunately the costs charged by smugglers to cover travel and false identity documents meant that she could only afford to take one of her two children. She took her four-year-old son and



left her thirteen-year-old son in the care of friends with the tearful promise that they would only be separated for a short period. “I was convinced that we would all be together very soon. If I had known that it would take so long I never would have left my other child behind,” said Angélique.

She and her younger son arrived in Canada after a harrowing trip where every moment was filled with the paralyzing fear of being discovered and sent back home.

Angélique made a refugee claim as soon as she landed in Canada. Aside from the small amount of money she had left, her only resources were her limited ability to speak French, and the names and addresses of a few friends of friends.

During the first few months, Angélique found herself queuing up before government offices and filling out an array of application forms. This was necessary in order to seek basic services and to move her refugee claim forward. Often forms were returned to her because they were found to be incomplete or wrongly filled out, and she had to do them over again.

With the help of a “legal aid” lawyer, she managed to navigate the complex and sometimes intimidating status determination process.

Though she was entitled to work while awaiting a decision on her application, the main problem was finding affordable care arrangements for her child. Without day care and the ability to speak English or French well, it was hard for her to find a job. Eventually, with the help of a few Canadians who befriended her, she managed to find some part-time cleaning work.

Finally it was time for her refugee hearing. This proved to be another challenge. In order to explain her claim, she had to re-live what she had experienced at home, and was forced to answer many questions which she found personal and troubling. “Even though my lawyer warned me about the kind of questions I would be asked, it was very hard for me to answer some of them” said Angélique. After the hearing the waiting started again. Nine months have passed since she arrived in Canada. All the while there is nothing she has been able to do to bring her other son to join her. She still has had no news of her husband. She has often felt that all her sacrifices were in vain. There are times when she is overcome with guilt for having left her other child behind.

Luckily, Angélique has found support and comfort from a small group of Canadian friends. She hopes to receive a decision soon, and she is confident that the Canadian authorities will believe her story. She regularly sends a small amount of money to the family looking after her older son, with the same promise that soon, she will be able to bring him to a safe new home.

# how

CAN I HELP?

Young people can take action to help refugees in their own communities. They can also help raise awareness of what it is like to be a refugee. Sometimes, just a smile and a word of welcome can go a long way. Here are some more concrete ideas for activities which you and your students could undertake:

- > Invite guest speakers into your classroom or community center. These could be refugees or persons who have worked with refugees.
- > Encourage your students to think about the people immediately around them who are refugees. Encourage them to talk to or interview family, friends or others in their community who came to Canada (or who had ancestors who came to Canada) as refugees. There may be refugees in your class who would like to share their stories, but you need to be cautious and not force people to talk about experiences they would rather keep to themselves.
- > Arrange to show a video with a refugee theme at school, or at your local faith community or community center.
- > Encourage students to organize a fundraising drive in support of refugees living in camps abroad.
- > Organize a contest for the best essay or artwork relating to the topic of refugees.
- > Encourage students to find out which refugees are arriving in their community and what services are available to them.
- > Encourage students to set up a school committee to help newly arrived refugee students and their parents.
- > Encourage students to write an article for their school or local newspaper about a refugee theme.
- > Encourage students to volunteer for a local agency or sponsorship group which helps newly arrived refugees, if opportunities exist.
- > Help students to organize a community event to celebrate the benefits of diversity, for example a pot luck supper, or a cultural evening.

# ordering information

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*Please send your requests to:*

Refugee Teaching Resources

United Nations Association in Canada

900-130 Slater Street

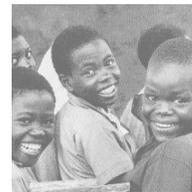
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6E2

Fax: (613) 563-2455

Email: [refugees@unac.org](mailto:refugees@unac.org)

Website: [www.unac.org](http://www.unac.org)

Requests will be confirmed and forwarded to the appropriate agency.



This Guide is produced by



United Nations Association in Canada  
[www.unac.org](http://www.unac.org)

In cooperation with



United Nations  
High Commissioner for Refugees  
[www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)

and



Canadian Council for Refugees  
[www.web.net/~cct/](http://www.web.net/~cct/)

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