

The Burning Bush

Troy Davies, Chief Executive Officer



They say one of the greatest gift of Easter is hope, and I can think of few things the world needs more.

The last two years have been challenging to say the least. From a global pandemic, to economic unrest, and now, conflict and war. This time has been dark and difficult for many.

Through it all, however, I am reminded of a quote by author Hal Borland, “No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn.”

As spring begins once more, I take heart in God’s promise. Even after the darkest nights, there comes a bright and beautiful dawn.

As the snow melts, the weather warms, and flowers bloom, know too that the challenges we face now will not last forever. Nor do we face these challenges alone.

Let us also remember the tremendous gift that we have been given. At CSS, we have been called to be the beacons of hope! We have been entrusted to walk and journey alongside the most vulnerable, those that have - and are - suffering deeply. For these individuals we have the chance to be the dawn in their darkest times, and a sign of hope for better times to come.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our work and mission. Thank you for your service in the face of adversity. And, thank you for being beacons of hope to a world in need right now.

Blessings always,

Troy



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CSS IN THE NEWS

Check out the links below for recent news stories on our agency's work and our supporters.

Sports program helps young Afghan refugees play and explore Edmonton -
<https://bit.ly/3itIKSj>

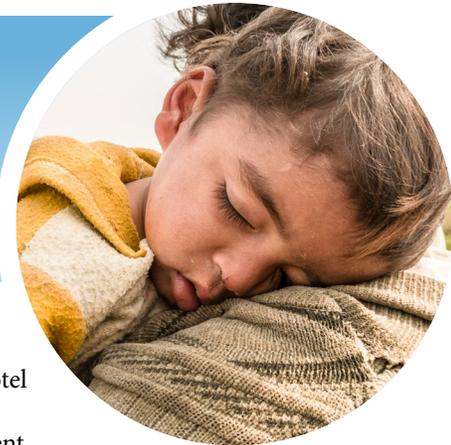
Catholic Social Services welcomes 170 Afghan refugees to Edmonton on Friday -
<https://bit.ly/3L7CR9H>

'He almost killed me': Catholic Social Services providing needed support as complexity of domestic violence cases rises amid the pandemic - <https://bit.ly/31C311z>

The New Canadians Health Centre aims to help refugees thrive - <https://bit.ly/3iy67du>

CSS SPOTLIGHT

Reception House



Catholic Social Services is a leading provider of immigration and settlement supports in central Alberta, serving more than 14,000 new Canadians annually, including all Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) who arrive in Edmonton and Red Deer.

In 2019/20, Catholic Social Services' helped resettle 819 GARs (as well as 202 privately sponsored refugees). These numbers could be even higher this year, as CSS works to respond to current and emerging refugee crises.

From the moment a refugee first steps off a plane and onto Canadian soil, a CSS settlement worker is there to journey with them on their first weeks and months in Canada. This journey often begins at Reception House, a residential program CSS operates, which houses GARs when they arrive in Edmonton (CSS opened a second Reception House, in Red Deer, in late 2021).

Most refugees stay at Reception House for two weeks. During this time, their immediate settlement needs are addressed and they are orientated to life in Canada. Settlement Counsellors help refugees find long term housing, make connections in the community, access English-language assessment, enrol children in school, and learn about job opportunities and career training. Edmonton's Reception House features 11 self-contained suites for individuals and families to stay, which include their own kitchens, living space, and bedrooms. Red Deer's Reception House has five self-contained suites.

If demand for suites is greater than the space available, CSS will find additional temporary accommodations in the community. This tactic was employed in early 2022 to respond to a large arrival of refugees from Afghanistan.

In this case, staff set up temporary offices in the hotel where families lived before transitioning into permanent housing in the community.

"Our services are really tailored to each family and each individual within that family and what their needs are," says Kathryn Friesen, Director, Immigration and Settlement Service. "We can walk them through that and we have many community partners as well, who we work with to provide support."

Among those community partners are other settlement agencies, government partners at the municipal, provincial and federal levels, ethno-cultural groups, school divisions, housing supports, and more.

Within its own team, Immigration and Settlement Service staff speak a combined 70+ different languages, which allows the team to provide a range of services in the languages clients speak.

Friesen says that meeting clients where they are at by delivering services in the languages they speak is important for building trust and understanding, as well as creating a safe and welcoming environment.

Want to see your program in an upcoming CSS Spotlight?

Email: communications@cssalberta.ca

Spiritual Care

Ash Wednesday (March 2, 2022) was the first in-person Mass celebrated in the Irwin Centre Chapel since the pandemic began. Pictured here are Archbishop Sylvan Lavoie, Deacon Randy Abele, Dr. Troy Davies, Sister Mary-Clare Stack and other staff. Prayers were offered for peace in Ukraine.



Payroll Calendar



All Catholic Social Services employees play an important part in ensuring they are paid accurately and on time.

To support you, we have created a Payroll Calendar for 2022 to help you keep track of time card entry and approval deadlines, as well as general holidays and paydays. You can find the calendar on the Payroll site, where you can also print a copy to post in your workspace to serve as a regular reminder of your payroll responsibilities.

If you have questions about the calendar, or payroll expectations, please contact payroll@cssalberta.ca

DSI Moment

Kirsten Anderson, VP of DSI

Cyber security Awareness Training Platform

In April, CSS will launch a new cyber security awareness training platform, which will allow the agency to establish an annual training program for all employees, in addition to personalized training sessions tailored to each employee's role within the agency.

Personalized training will be offered in small sessions on a more frequent basis, to help keep cyber security awareness top of mind for staff. The platform, operated through software provider MetaCompliance, aims to make security

awareness an "engaging learning experience," that will empower employees to protect the agency from potential cyber risks.

Training tasks will be embedded in Microsoft Teams, so employees can easily check what has been, or needs to be, completed.

Be sure to watch Portal for additional information and upcoming announcements this spring on our new cyber security awareness training sessions!



Employee Engagement Survey

The 2022 Employee Engagement Survey will take place from May 2 to 31. The survey should take no more than five minutes to complete. Participation is not mandatory, however, your feedback is crucial to understanding the experience of our employees, what we are doing well, and where additional supports are needed.

On May 2, the link to the survey will be sent out through email and will be posted on the Portal. The link will take you to the external survey tool. Using this external tool is our way of ensuring survey results are confidential. No names or personal identifying information will be collected, and results will be grouped and shared with staff this fall.

If you would like to fill out a paper survey, please speak to your supervisor.



YOUR voice.
YOUR engagement.

We Want to Hear From You!

CEO's Office - Anti Racism Statement

On March 21, 2022, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Catholic Social Services' released the following Anti-Racism statement, developed by the agency's Anti-Racism Advisory Council:

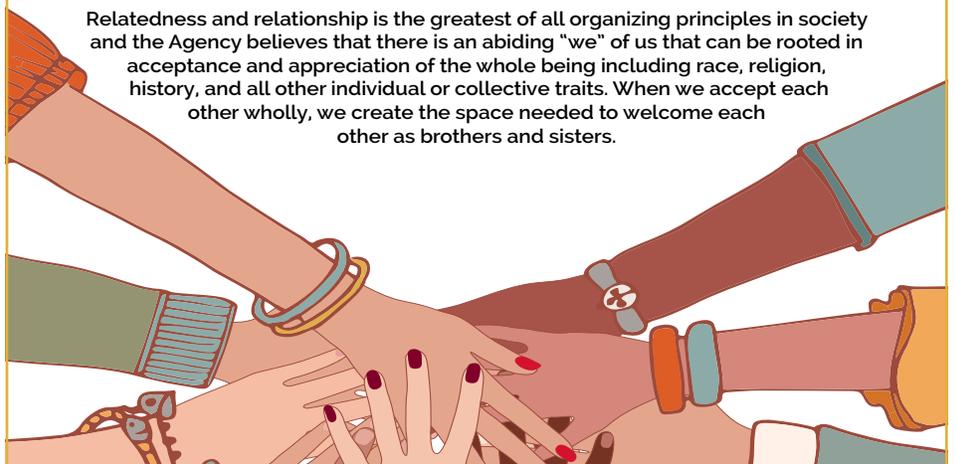
Catholic Social Services has a longstanding history of working toward the betterment of people, especially the most vulnerable amongst us. We are an agency that values humility, compassion and respect for all people. As a consequence, we hold that racism is an affront to human dignity and is dehumanizing to everyone it touches.

We acknowledge that racism exists in both conscious and unconscious forms and that members of our Agency experience it and are harmed by it. As an organization embedded within a society that experiences the effects of systemic racism, we acknowledge that the Agency itself must confront any internalized forms of racism and implicit bias.

The Agency challenges itself to identify and encounter issues related to racism and any negative impacts it has on our organization and its people. It challenges itself to address and correct any inequities, disproportionalities and disparities it may discover.

We undertake to create a workplace culture that reflects an anti-racist commitment and to developing and implementing policies, practice and strategies that dismantle and disrupt racism or any perpetuation of it.

Relatedness and relationship is the greatest of all organizing principles in society and the Agency believes that there is an abiding "we" of us that can be rooted in acceptance and appreciation of the whole being including race, religion, history, and all other individual or collective traits. When we accept each other wholly, we create the space needed to welcome each other as brothers and sisters.



Stories from the Frontlines: A Dream Come True



Kelly has been a die-hard Montreal Canadiens fan since he was a young boy, but had never been able to see his favourite team in action.

Each year, CSS Service Coordinators help clients across our PDD and SIL programs to set personal goals, and then support clients as they work to achieve them.

Kelly's most recent goal was also his biggest dream: to see the Montreal Canadiens play in person.

Kelly saved up throughout 2021, but was still short the total ticket cost. Just before Christmas, Nicole Tyress, one of Kelly's Service Coordinators, met with Kelly's brother and told him about the goal. His brother was happy to help pay what was left, and then, along with Nicole and other CSS staff, surprised Kelly on Christmas morning.

"We had tried to arrange for him to go in the past, but because of the weather, health concerns, and COVID we were never able to make it work," says Ashley, who has supported Kelly for the past seven years. "This year, everything flawlessly aligned. It was so special to be able to see, and be a part of, Kelly fulfilling his dream. There are honestly no words to describe how it made me feel to be able to take him and cheer alongside him. I am incredibly thankful and grateful to have shared this experience."

Ashley says Kelly was smiling from ear-to-ear with excitement. To top it off, the Canadiens won the game! Afterward, while walking through the crowd, many other fans approached Kelly to celebrate, giving him "high-fives" and cheering together for their team.

Kelly is a "man of few words," but in that moment he was happy to cheer, "Go Habs!" and celebrate the victory among other fans.

"The smile on his face, the excitement in his voice, and the many times he said thank you, told me just how much it meant to him to have this experience," says Ashley.

Want to see your work in a future edition of The Beacon? Email: communications@cssalberta.ca

2ND ANNUAL VIRTUAL

CEO Town Hall

Thank you to everyone who attended our second annual CEO Town Hall, held on Monday, March 7, 2022! If you did yet have a chance to watch the event, you can find a link to the recording on [Portal](#).

At the CEO Town Hall questions were asked about a range of issues including Truth and Reconciliation, Payroll, staff pay, anti-racism, and others.

On the day we received many questions so were unable to get to them all. Many of the questions were asked anonymously, and as a result we could not respond directly to the questions after the event.

If you asked a question at the event and your question was not answered, or you have a question you would like to ask, please email Director of Development and Community Relations, Eoin Murray at eoin.murray@cssalberta.ca to receive a direct and confidential response.

Mental Health Tips

Catholic Social Services cares about the health and wellbeing of its employees. If you (or your family members) are struggling with anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns, please know that you do not have to face these challenges alone.

All CSS employees and their immediate families have access to free, short-term, professional counselling services through the agency's Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). Counselling services are offered through Homewood Health, and can be done in person, online, or over the phone.

For more information on EFAP and how to access it, please visit homewoodhealth.com/individuals/services/efap or call 1-800-663-1142.



Prime Minister's Visit

Prime Minister Trudeau recently met with CSS CEO Dr. Troy Davies and recent arrivals from Afghanistan and Ukraine. CSS continues to serve refugees and newcomers from these countries as well as Eritrea, Myanmar, the D.R.C. and elsewhere.



Staff raise \$9,090 for Sign of Hope

CSS staff did amazing things to fundraise in support of our Sign of Hope programs during our 2021 Sign of Hope Campaign! Our Sign of Hope Employee Development committee (SHED) representatives worked with the agency leadership team to develop fun challenges, and YOU really responded, by getting your hair dyed, holding snakes and more! Our very successful, HOPEfull FUNdraising Challenge, brought in a total of \$9,090 contributing to the \$3.2 million raised for the vulnerable individuals we serve. Thank you for being a lifeline of hope to those in need today, tomorrow, and beyond! *We have two more challenge videos which will be posted on the Portal very soon.!*



Digital Transformation Initiative Launches

At Catholic Social Services, our mission has always been to bring hope and healing to the most vulnerable among us. Over our 60 years of operation, we've built many administrative systems – both technological and manual - to help us live out that mission.

Last year, the CSS Board of Directors approved funding to research what would be involved in a major modernization of our systems, or, a “Digital Transformation.”

To date, much of that research, back-end analysis, and groundwork has been done. In the next stage of this work, the agency will develop a “roadmap” that will identify opportunities where processes and systems can be improved, and the technology solutions that can help make those improvements happen.



Our focus will initially be in human resources, finance, payroll and our client case management systems. This work will take place over several years, and will aim to create digital systems that:

- Are easier to work with;
- Reduce the volume of manual work for staff;
- Are integrated and unified into a seamless whole;
- Provide the highest quality services;
- Will last the agency for years to come - setting us up for long-term success!

If you have questions about the project please feel free to contact your Digital Transformation service area representative (can be found on the DSI site), or, email cssstaffquestions@cssalberta.ca

