There are many roads on the long walk to protection...
For 25 years, Action Réfugiés Montréal has accompanied refugeeed people. Our founders analyzed the gaps in services being offered to people living through forced migration and created this not-for-profit—with big dreams. For a generation now, we’ve provided accompaniment and promoted inclusion of refugeeed people with the support of core funding from the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Anglican Diocese of Montreal. An important part of the journey to protection, at times overlooked, is that social integration and participation in community also contribute to refugeeed people feeling secure and protected.

In 2018, we experienced a year of growth and hope—and met challenges head on. While we welcomed over 100 sponsored refugeeed people, we were very limited in the number of new cases we were permitted to submit. We worked hard to provide ongoing support to hundreds of people in the Immigration Holding Centre (IHC) and were disappointed to see children in detention despite new directives from federal authorities aimed at preventing the detention of families. Our Men’s Group continued to grow, both in attendance and in the scope of its reach, and our Twinning Program continued to be an excellent vehicle for promoting inclusion and integration of women who have lived a refugee experience.

We are encouraged that residents in Montreal, in Quebec, and all across Canada continue to reach out to refugeeed people, extending a hand of friendship and support. In order to provide compassion and justice to even more people, we have expanded our team yet again—made possible by financial contributors like you.

The milestone of our 25th year has prompted us to reflect on the long roads people walk to get to Canada, and the journeys they continue on after arriving here. Our path has been winding, challenging, and tearful—yet successful. On the following pages, we’re pleased to provide a retrospective of our accomplishments over the past 25 years, all of which have been made possible thanks to the support of many groups and individuals.

We’re counting on you to continue along the journey with us.
- Paul Clarke
1993
The first meeting of the “Refugee Subcommittee” leads to the 1994 founding of Action Réfugiés Montréal; Glynis Williams serves as Director for 18 years, followed by Paul Clarke as Director in 2013.

1995
Twinning Program is launched in partnership with Refuge Juan Moreno.

1997
Umbrella agreement for refugee sponsorship is signed with Quebec (previously this had only been signed with the federal government).

1999
Grant is received for the creation of a part-time detention program employee to coordinate ongoing weekly detention visits.

1999
Twinning Program is launched in partnership with Refuge Juan Moreno.

1997
Umbrella agreement for refugee sponsorship is signed with Quebec (previously this had only been signed with the federal government).

2002
Agreement is signed with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, formalizing access to the Immigration Holding Centre (detention centre).

2005
Detention Program is expanded and Twinning Program is continued, following periods of financial uncertainty.

2010
ARM begins receiving a multi-year grant intended to increase capacity and visibility.

2013
ARM takes on a leadership role, participating in more community events and fundraising activities such as the Ride for Refuge, Refugee Rights Day celebrations, and World Refugee Day events.

2014
ARM responds to overseas refugee crises by substantially expanding its sponsorship program.

2015
Media coverage of refugee issues combined with public interest results in increased funding that allows ARM to double its staff (from three to six) and better respond to the individuals we accompany.

2018
ARM continues to grow and innovate, creating new opportunities for the inclusion and protection of refugeed people, a term we coined recently.
Detention Program

Snapshots from the Past

1996  Detention centre moves to a rented correctional facility in Laval, where it remains today.

2002  Increase in detention of refugee claimants for identity reasons.

2006  Departure of social worker from detention centre staff, leaving a significant gap.

2013  Changes to the refugee determination system compel us to increase our visits to twice weekly despite no additional resources.

When Will We Stop Seeing Families in Detention?

The detention of children has long been a concern for ARM. In 1999, we raised our voices about the long-term detention of 13 children. In 2009, we worked with the Canadian Council for Refugees on a report documenting the seriousness of this issue. Today, nearly 10 years later, we would have hoped that a meaningful commitment would finally have been made to keep children and families out of detention. We’ve been extremely disappointed to see so many families detained throughout the year—many with very young children and many for over a month—despite new policy directives. This reality underscores the importance of our regular visits and our advocacy work.

Finding Acceptance

Last year we reported on the precarious situation of an Egyptian man we had met in detention and who was being denied access to the refugee determination system and threatened with immediate deportation. The existence of online evidence convinced authorities to allow him to submit an alternative application for protection. We accompanied him along his journey as he endured the constant stress of knowing this procedure has a mere 3% acceptance rate, compared to the over 80% acceptance rate for Egyptians in the refugee claim process. Late in 2018, Ahmed was called in to be informed of the decision. Terrified of refusal, arrest, and deportation, he came to see us just before his appointment. Soon afterwards, the message came back that he had been granted “acceptance”! Our joy for Ahmed is coupled with a reminder of how hard we must continue working in our support of other people we meet in detention—people who face barriers to protection, who risk being deported back to a place of persecution, and who are continuously seeking acceptance.

Students at the Heart of our Detention Program

Over the years, dozens of student interns, mainly from the fields of law, social work, and criminology, have supported our Detention Program. It is their hard work and dedication that allows us to accompany more people, fill more gaps, and enrich our advocacy efforts.

Ahmed, now a protected person in Canada, alongside Pete, our summer social work intern, volunteering together at our Summer Fair outside St Jax.
Sponsorship Program

In 1994, Action Réfugiés Montréal submitted refugee sponsorship applications for 47 individuals and families from countries including Afghanistan, Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sri Lanka.

Now, 25 years later, we are proud to have welcomed over 1,300 formerly refugeed people.

ARM strongly believes that a well-functioning community sponsorship program is crucial. It is part of our Canadian cultural heritage and contributes to the richness of our country.

The Circle of Sponsorship over 25 Years

Through our partnerships with sponsors, we see the courage and commitment of individuals who exemplify true humanity in the face of war and conflict. Many sponsors have themselves lived a refugeed trajectory, often largely contributing to their motivation to sponsor their own loved ones fleeing persecution. Sponsors continuously put their hearts, time, money, and energy into this long and challenging process. The sponsorship team works closely with both sponsors and newly arrived persons to facilitate this process and accompany those individuals and families in their resettlement.

ARM’s Longest Sponsorship File—over 9 Years until its completion

A refugee sponsorship file was initiated in 2009 for a single person trying to survive in a very challenging country. After forced departures from at least three different countries, this brave individual ended up in another insecure place. In search of stability during the long and delayed processing of their file, this person found a partner and had a child. Even in conflict and danger, life continues... We had a joyful time when we were finally able to welcome them to Montreal in 2018 and are so happy to keep in touch as they make their way forward. The young child, mother, and father are all doing well and we rejoice that this small family is now in Canada.

Heartwarmer Alert

Do you remember reading about Karim* in ARM’s 2016 Annual Report? He was desperately waiting for his wife and baby daughter to join him in Canada, after having been separated for many years. In 2018, after excruciatingly long administrative delays, Karim was finally able to greet his wife and child at the airport and welcome them into their new home in Montreal. They now have a new addition to the family—the first to be born in Canada—and we are so thrilled to see them growing together and continuing their lives here in peace. This is just one of the hundreds of incredible stories that we hear in our office!

* Names have been changed.

HUGE workload!

Since 2016, two employees work directly with about 550 people each year (300 overseas and 250 in Canada).

The “hidden helpers” are our program volunteers, interns, technology specialists, interpreters, and summer students who provide thousands of hours of valuable, highly skilled support.

Interpreters and translators (in 10 languages so far!) are essential to the program and enable important conversations to take place.

In 2018, 109 sponsored persons arrived, including 47 children.
Twinning Program

Snapshots from the Past

2005  Part-time position is created to ensure program continuity.

2013  Regular group activities offer a new feature to the program.

2016  Special multi-year grant is received to fund group activities.

Ebb and Flows of our Twinning Program

For over 15 years, we partnered with Refuge Juan Moreno, a residence for refugee claimant women and children, to seek out new participants for our Twinning Program. When it closed in 2010, we reached out to lawyers and social workers in an effort to continue offering women seeking refugee status this unique opportunity for friendship and exchange. In 2013, after a massive reform of the refugee claim process, it became difficult to include refugee claimants, as they had only 60 days to meet their basic needs while preparing for their refugee hearing. Our participation diversified to include women sponsored by ARM and women recognized as refugeed people in Canada. As the waiting period for refugee hearings became longer, we reached out again to claimants, returning to our early objectives while maintaining a more diverse group.

New Friendship, Growing Families

Early in the year, we matched Asma*, a woman who had arrived through ARM’s sponsorship program, with Carine*, who had found out about us through a connection with the St Jax Montréal community (from whom we rent our office). Despite a language barrier, the two made a fast connection. To everyone’s surprise, they soon found out they would both be giving birth in the same month! By year’s end, they had formed a strong bond, both babies had arrived, and we welcomed their growing families into our community of twins.

* Names have been changed

Men’s Group

Snapshots from the Past

2017

In 2017, in partnership with Saint Columba House, we launched a social group for men we have met in detention and men who have arrived through our sponsorship program. With a focus on community building, this group was developed to fill a gap in programming for men. Our first event: a soccer game!

During 2018 we watched our Men’s Group increase both in size and frequency, with monthly activities and up to 20 men in attendance. Activities included lively discussions of Canadian politics and Canadian football, a bike-repair workshop, and pumpkin carving. Each activity ended with a nourishing meal. Though participation fluctuated, a core group of regular participants emerged. They, in turn, have begun welcoming newcomers and taking on a greater sense of ownership of the growing community. We are excited to see how this initiative evolves.
Messages from the Board

The members of the board are privileged to carry on the work started in 1994 to welcome refugeeed people in the Montreal area. Over the years, our board has continued to have members representing our founding churches as well as other faith groups. In addition, people having lived forced migration, lawyers, and other members of the community have given generously of their time and talents. ARM has grown substantially and we are concentrating our efforts to ensure that we continue to accompany as many people as possible. We will in the near future embark on a visioning process in order to map out the next steps in our journey.

Phil Dawson - Chair

Over the last 25 years, the number of displaced persons in the world has tripled. Since 1994, ARM has had years when finances were a true struggle and resources were strained, but we’ve always known that our programs are unique and have found the means to carry on. Now, thanks to our donors’ generous gifts in 2018, we exceeded our revenue forecasts and registered a small surplus.

ARM continues to provide valuable information and accompaniment and strives to meet an ever-growing need as more people are forced to flee their homes. In 2018, we increased our staff to seven employees – a record number – in order to accompany as many people as possible. Our challenge remains scaling up our programs as demands continue to rise. Our sponsorship activities have a lifecycle that spans multiple years. Follow-up is required throughout the pre-arrival processing of the applications, as well as after the sponsored family or person arrives. Every day detained people call to seek our knowledge and support in navigating often precarious legal situations. As we develop our Twinning Program and Men’s Group, we have been able to include more people in social activities – an important part of protection and integration of refugeeed people.

In addition to its operating account, ARM manages a segregated in-trust account containing funds provided by Canadian residents who have applied to sponsor refugeeed people. In 2018, $369,028 was disbursed from the in-trust account to support sponsored newcomers at the start of their lives in Canada. At the end of 2018, this account held $968,922 for sponsored people, some of whom are in Canada already, and 180 who still await arrival. All of us at ARM extend warm thanks to you, our generous donors, for your support and commitment to this cause.

Vesna Milicevic - Treasurer

With thanks to some of our many long-time Board members:
Margaret Bryson
Mitch Goldberg
Ian Macdonald
Michael Robson
Patil Tutunjian
and Sue Winn

“ARM was founded following a consultation in which we identified gaps in the services being provided to refugeeed people. We wanted to respond to those individuals and meet the needs that no one else seemed to be meeting. The three priorities that emerged were detention, private refugee sponsorship, and accompaniment with a focus on women.”

Janet Dench - Founding board member of ARM and Executive Director of the Canadian Council for Refugees

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Board Members
Phil Dawson: Chair
Katrina Heyde: Vice-Chair
Vesna Milicevic: Treasurer
Maura McGrath: Secretary
Stewart Blott (January–August 2018)
Jane Bracewell (September 2018 onward)
Robert Camara
Roland De Vries
Dilara Dzafik (January–June 2018)
Jane Maxwell
Anna Purkey
Patil Tutunjian
Louise Willis

Active Board members and staff alongside former board members.
Participants in the twinning program enjoyed a joint outing with sponsored families to pick apples in the fall.
**Staff**

Paul Clarke, Executive Director  
Diane Arakaza, Administrative Assistant (March onward)  
Zehra Kavame, Administrative Coordinator (January-February)  
Cathy Nguyen, Sponsorship Program Coordinator  
Emily Woods, Sponsorship Program Integration Counsellor  
Jenny Jeanes, Detention and Twinning Program Coordinator  
Camila Sanchez-Lancheros, Detention Program Assistant (January-August)  
Hanna Caldwell, Assistant Coordinator - Twinning Program (October onward)  
Caroline Lavoie, Sponsorship Program Assistant (Summer job)  
Megham Leconte-Léon, Twinning Program Assistant (Summer job)

**Interns**

Éric Bérard-Forget, Université de Montréal, School of Criminology  
Peter Butler, McGill University, School of Social Work  
Hilary Chu, McGill University, Faculty of Law  
Megham Leconte-Léon, Université de Montréal, School of Social Work  
Camelia Ivaschescu, Université de Montréal, Faculty of Law  
Nadja Momcilovic, Université de Montréal, Faculty of Law  
Dominique Verdurmen, McGill University, Faculty of Law

**Volunteers**

Our small staff relies on a dedicated team of volunteers to carry out our program activities and extend our reach. We offer our most sincere gratitude to the over 100 people who donated their time in 2018.

ARM relies on the support of individual donors. Please consider a donation. Because of you, we know we will be able to accomplish even more together in the years to come.

We thank our institutional donors and hundreds of individual donors.

ABC Life Literacy Canada  
Action Réfugiés Sutton - Steering Committee, QC  
Anglican Diocese of Montreal  
Barreau du Quebec  
Bellini Foundation, AB  
Blue Sea Philanthropy, ON  
Briarwood Presbyterian Church, Beaconsfield, QC  
Catholic Women’s League of Canada-St Edmund of Canterbury Parish, QC  
Cedar Park United Church, QC  
Centre de la Grande Montréal  
Charis Foundation, ON  
Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal  
Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal- Social Services Society  
Christ Church, Anglican Parish of Rawdon, QC  
Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, QC  
CN Employees’ and Pensioners’ Community Fund  
Colwyn and Jean Rich Foundation, QC  
Congregation of Notre Dame of Québec, QC  
Congregation of Notre Dame- Visitacion Province, NS  
Deep River Community Church, ON  
Famaglia Investments, QC  
Finance Québec- Soutien à l’action bénévole  
Fond Marie- François, QC  
Fondation du Grand Montréal, QC  
George Hogg Family Foundation, QC  
Georgetown Presbyterian Church, QC  
Government of Canada- Canada Summer Jobs  
Hemmingford Community Aidning Refugee People, QC  
Howick United Church, QC  
Howick United Church Women, QC  
Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal, QC  
Knox Presbyterian Church-St Catherine’s, ON  
Les Cévennes, QC  
Les Sociétés des Saints Sœurs de Jésus et Marie, QC  
Maplewood Presbyterian Church, QC  
McCarthy Tetrault LLP, QC  
Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal, QC  
Montreal Gazette, QC  
Montreal Model United Nations Conference, Dawson College, QC  
Montreal West United for Syrian Refugees Committee, QC  
Montreal West Presbyterian Church, QC  
Northern Nitrogen, QC  
Nos Plumes comme nos Armes, QC  
Oeuvres Le Royer, QC  
Oeuvres Marie Anne Lavallée, QC  
Presbyterian Church in Canada- Canadian Ministries  
Presbyterian Church in Canada- Presbytery of Montreal  
Quebec Immigration Lawyers Association  
Sisters of Charity Halifas, NS  
Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, ON  
Sisters of St. Martha, NS  
St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Saint Lambert, QC  
St Columba-by-the-Lake Presbyterian Church, QC  
St Edmund of Canterbury Parish, QC  
St Giles (North Sydney) Presbyterian Church, NS  
St Jax Montréal  
St Stephen’s Anglican Church, QC  
TD Bank Group  
Trinity (Carp) Presbyterian Church, ON  
Unifor Social Justice Fund  
United Way, Toronto & York Region, ON  
Victoire, ON  
West Village Choral-New York  
Women’s Missionary Society  
of the Presbyterian Church in Canada  
Women’s Missionary Society- Montreal