



# ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



# A Year of Accomplishment

It was a year of change for Project Abraham, with Executive Director Debbie Rose's retirement in the spring of 2024. Debbie was the driving force behind Project Abraham from the beginning, and with her leadership and vision, she saw the organization grow into a registered charity serving hundreds of clients. Helen Latimer was appointed Executive Director in April 2024 and is working to uphold and honour Debbie's vision.

With funding from the Regional Municipality of York, we launched a pilot program in the spring called "Reaching Yezidis: Support and Empowerment" (RYSE). The RYSE program is designed to help Yezidi women survivors of gender-based violence.

In the fall, we received the happy news that funding from the TD Foundation was renewed for an additional three years. Thus, our popular Homework Club will continue providing 1-2-1 tutoring to students in kindergarten through grade 12. The J. Armand Bombardier Foundation also renewed its funding for three additional years. This funding is of great importance to Project Abraham as it is for capacity building.

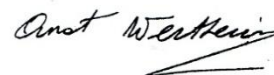
In the fall, the federal government announced significant reductions in the number of newcomers allowed to enter Canada. Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada announced corresponding cuts to funding in late November which had impact on settlement organizations across Canada.

At Project Abraham, we faced our reduced allocation as an opportunity to reexamine all our program delivery and uncover creative ways to continue to provide our clients with high-quality services, preserve the team, and even find ways to grow.

As we move forward, we continue to rely on the generosity of our donors and supporters. Donations from individual donors are supporting the expansion of our Homework Club, and YES! classes, the opening of our women's empowerment program to newcomers from across the GTA and even launch new programs! Your donations are deeply appreciated and make a difference for our clients and the organization.

We are proud and deeply appreciative of our dedicated staff and Board of Directors for their commitment and dedication to improving the lives of our clients. We look forward to the continuation of our collaborative work throughout 2025.

*Helen Latimer*



Helen Latimer

Anat Wertheim

Executive Director

Chair, Board of Directors

# Mission

To provide newcomer services, compassionate care and a supportive community for refugees, survivors of persecution and war, enabling them to overcome their traumas and thrive in Canada.

# Vision

Our vision is to become a leading resettlement organization, providing individualized and comprehensive services to refugees who are survivors of persecution and war, enabling them to integrate effectively into Canadian society.



**Project ABRAHAM**

[www.projectabraham.ca](http://www.projectabraham.ca)



Over 300 clients served    70% of our clients are women    Top 3 countries of origin: Iraq, Ukraine, Iran

## Events

### Summer Picnic

Project Abraham's 2nd annual Potluck Picnic was held on August 25 at the Richmond Green Sports Centre and Park. Well attended by clients, staff and volunteers, the picnic featured hotdogs and games for the children. Many delicious dishes were enjoyed by the over 50 people in attendance. If you missed it, please join us this summer on Saturday, August 23.

### Winter Clothing Event

With a generous donation of new winter coats and accessories from Brands for Canada along with donations from individual donors, Project Abraham was able to host a very successful winter clothing event for our clients addressing clothing insecurity during the changing season ensuring no one would be cold during the winter. The event was held at PCF Souvenirs in Markham where there was plenty of space for the clothing, 85 clients and our staff and volunteers.



# YES! English Language Classes

The YES! English Language Classes help newcomers build confidence in their ability to communicate in English, providing a vital foundation for adjusting to life in Canada. The program supports individuals with learning challenges, learners starting from basic literacy for those with no prior exposure to English and progresses through intermediate levels. With each step, participants gain the skills they need to navigate their new environment and prepare for opportunities like further education or employment.

## Highlights

- **Small Class Sizes:** With 4-6 students per class, learners receive personalized attention and ample opportunity for interaction.
- **Certified Teachers:** Classes are led by experienced TESL-certified instructors who provide patient, skillful guidance.
- **Virtual Classes:** All sessions are conducted online, ensuring accessibility and convenience for participants.



## Impact

- **Participants Served:** Over 123 students enrolled in the program this year.
- **Progress Achieved:** 94% of students reported improvement in their English-speaking skills and 100% reported satisfaction with their teacher.

“I liked the method of teaching. It made it very easy for me to learn. Now I'm able to read signs when I'm driving, and I can read my text messages. Before I used to take it to someone else to read; now I can read it myself and I'm understanding what I'm reading.”

The YES! English Language Classes continue to be a lifeline for newcomers navigating the challenges of resettlement in a new country. With each session, participants gain not only language skills but also the confidence to take their next steps toward employment and community engagement.

## CAMH

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) has been a committed partner to Project Abraham for the four years that the YES! program has been in existence. Once per month, a social worker from CAMH joins our YES! Teacher's meetings and provides training and support to assist teachers in dealing with challenges arising from client trauma as well as protecting themselves from experiencing vicarious trauma.

## Success Story

Anastasi arrived from Ukraine with two young daughters and a strong desire to become financially independent, but her lack of English was a barrier to achieving that goal. Undeterred, she set up a nail studio in her home, but her income was limited because she could only accept Ukrainian-speaking clients.



Anastasia decided to enroll in Project Abraham's YES English language program and immediately began to acquire the English language skills she needed to expand her business. Individualized lessons meant that she quickly learned how to say, "What nail shape do you prefer?", "When would you like your next appointment?", "Where can I find nail supplies?" and "What time does the store close?" Role-playing activities allowed her to simulate conversations with customers, preparing her to answer questions and offer her services to a wider audience.

Anastasia has now updated her advertising materials to include English, learned how to explain her pricing and services clearly, and developed scripts for common client interactions. Anastasia's small home studio is flourishing. English-speaking clients rave about her attention to detail, while her loyal Ukrainian-speaking clients celebrate her success as a reflection of their shared cultural resilience.

In addition, Anastasia has learned the vocabulary she needs to attend parent-teacher meetings. She has successfully asked questions like, "How are my daughters adjusting to the curriculum?", and "What can I do to support their learning at home?". She can now read school newsletters, follow instructions from teachers, and help her daughters with homework— all in English. These moments were transformative for Anastasia, making her feel fully integrated into her children's lives and our local community.

## Newcomer Services

Project Abraham's settlement services are our first touch point with many of our clients. We begin with an assessment that identifies the needs of each client and the supports that are required. We work with partnering organizations such as CAMH, Family Services York Region and YMCA to ensure all needs are met.

Our settlement team includes one full time employee and a part-time employee who focus exclusively on clients in the Yezidi community. Between these 2 people, we support 40-50 families at any one time, many of whom are families with high needs.

## Success Story

AT, a single mother and newcomer to Ontario, faced significant challenges when trying to enroll her son in school. Despite visiting the district school board multiple times, she was unable to secure a spot for her child due to incomplete immigration documentation. After a year of unsuccessful attempts, AT began to lose hope.

Fortunately, she was connected with Project Abraham. With the dedicated support of one of our settlement workers, AT received help navigating the complex documentation process. Our team advocated on her behalf, guided her step-by-step, and worked collaboratively with the school board to ensure her son could be enrolled.

Today, AT's son is not only attending school but is thriving in his studies. Thanks to the support of Project Abraham, AT and her son now have renewed hope for a brighter future in Canada.

## Impact



**94 clients received needs assessments**

**135 clients received information and referrals to other organizations**



## Success Story

WP is a 25-year-old woman who came to Canada in 2017 with her little sister, the only one left of her family members who is free. WP lives with her sister in subsidized government housing. Both her parents and her siblings are in ISIS captivity and based on what has been disclosed by WP while she was in captivity, she was enslaved to ISIS soldiers. She had experienced all kinds of atrocities at the hands of ISIS. They separated all her family members and only left her with her youngest sister, who is now with her in Canada. While living in Canada, WP found herself in an abusive relationship with her aunt, with whom she resided.

WP and her sister have complex trauma, based on the psychiatrist's report. In 2024, WP was referred to Project Abraham by JIAS Toronto building on the important connection of the two agencies serving the Yazidi community. It was important that WP was transferred to an agency that could identify with cultural, emotional and resettlement needs. Trust, familiarity, and care were paramount when dealing with WP's needs. Project Abraham took over her file, and WP was paired with a client support worker with lived experience from the Yazidi community.

WP's support journey began when she joined Project Abraham's YES! English language training program and Project Abraham became further involved with WP when she needed to complete the guardianship agreement for her sister. For a number of issues, WP could not complete this process on her own; for example, she struggles with mental health issues, limitations with information retention, memory challenges, and limited English language.

Project Abraham's client support worker engaged WP in weekly check-ins and provided her with interpretation, emotional support, and encouragement with her therapist appointments from the Cedar Centre. As the information shared in these meetings was very sensitive, it was important that the interpreter was not only consistent but trustworthy, empathetic, and professional. We were able to provide this specific intervention for WP.

On December 18th, 2024, WP's guardianship trial with the court to grant her authority over her sister regarding school, medical care, and many other life aspects began. During the trial, the judge was very emotional about WP's story and was proud of her commitment to remain there for her sister despite her life challenges. The judge stated that it was the first time in her job to hear such a sad story, and based on WP's testimony, the court had no doubt in granting WP to be the caregiver for her sister.

WP is now her sister's temporary guardian as they await approval from the Children's Aid Society. She is well on her way to becoming her sister's permanent guardian and decision-maker by the end of March 2025 and continues to engage in language learning at Project Abraham.

## RYSE Women's Empowerment Program



Our RYSE Women's Empowerment was piloted in the spring of 2024. With the support of an advisory board, we designed the program to provide Yezidi women residing in York Region with knowledge and resources related to wellness and self-care to build resilience and foster community connections.

The pilot program delivered inclusive access to programming for newcomer women in response to a lack of culturally specific, trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate training.

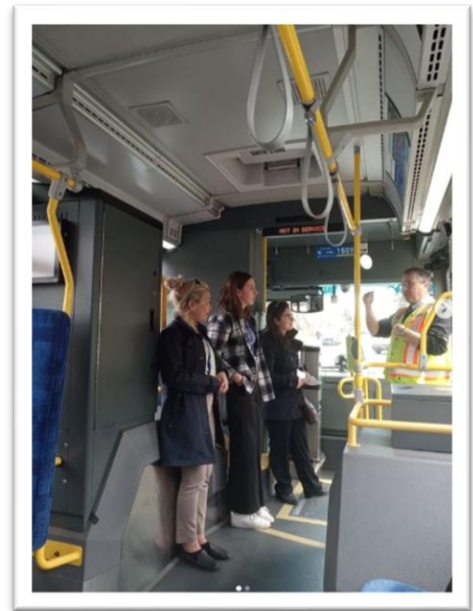
During 12 weeks of in-person sessions, specific topics, including self-care strategies, use of public transportation, digital literacy and cyberbullying, were presented. Facilitators took care to provide a safe and inclusive environment.

The women who attended the program developed personalized plans and received case management from Project Abraham's team. And the results were gratifying.



Women shared they increased their knowledge of how to cope with stress and accessed community services more frequently. A sense of community was developed as the women got to know and support each other.

In the late fall, a one-day self-care workshop was held on a Saturday to accommodate the scheduling challenges of newcomer single mothers. Held at a branch of the Richmond Hill Library system, the workshop was well attended by women and their children. The RYSE team provided activities, refreshments, and on-site childcare so the women could engage in the program without distraction.



## Impact

**Participants Served:** 15 women attended the 12-week program, and 13 women and 8 children attended the Saturday workshop in the fall.

**Informal Counselling & Case Management:** with the focus of mental well-being promotion and early intervention, 15 women received short term counselling sessions, and a 2-3 month follow up meeting.

**Progress Achieved:** The program was assessed by an external evaluator who noted **the program was effective in achieving participant outcomes in mental health, knowledge, self-sufficiency, and taking initiative.** the following outcomes:

- 73% of participants increased knowledge of how to cope with stress since the beginning of the program.
- 64% of participants reported that they use coping skills when they feel stressed more often than they did at the start of the program.
- 80% of participants reported an increase in how often they access community services. With this increased access to local community services, it is expected that there will be more involvement in their communities, leading to a reduction in social isolation.

## Success Story



NA, a survivor of the 2014 Yazidi Genocide, endured three years of ISIS captivity and the heartbreak of being separated from her daughter. After six painful years apart, they were finally reunited — a moment filled with tears, joy, and the powerful bond between mother and child. Arriving in Canada in 2017 with two of her children, NA held onto hope

for a better future. She worked tirelessly to care for her family while navigating an entirely new country and system.

Knowing her love for sewing, Project Abraham provided her with a sewing machine — reigniting her passion. She found purpose in the RYSE program’s sewing sessions, where she not only developed skills, but also connected with others and began dreaming of becoming a tailor. Determined to protect her children from harsh winters and long waits, NA learned how to drive. She now proudly drives her kids to school in her own car — a symbol of independence and dignity.

“My dream is to give my children a life like everyone else in Canada.”

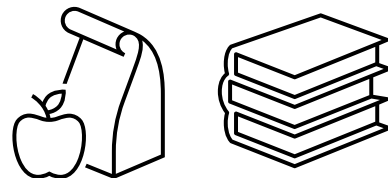
The RYSE program became a place of community, creativity, and healing for NA. She especially loved the sewing sessions, where she could reconnect with a hobby she once loved — and do it in a space where she felt a sense of belonging.

“We got together — that helped me with my isolation. What I loved most about it was how connected we felt. I’m really looking forward to doing it again.”

Beyond learning practical skills, RYSE taught self-care and wellness — giving NA not only tools for employment but also the emotional strength to care for herself in a way she hadn’t had space to before. These programs nurtured her dream of becoming a tailor and gave her hope for a future beyond survival.

NA’s story is a testament to what’s possible with the right support. Through your donations, volunteer work, and continued care, we can help more survivors rebuild with hope, strength, and dignity.

## The Homework Club



We developed the Homework Club to help students close the educational gap created when students are placed in grades according to their age but without the foundational knowledge of their peers. For the past three years, the Homework Club has been a beacon of hope for Yezidi students and their families, making a significant difference in their lives.

The Homework Club connects students with one of our four tutors for one-to-one support. Using the IXL learning platform, each student is assessed to determine their current level of knowledge. The tutor then creates an individual learning plan and provides homework and encouragement to their students. Each student also has access to the IXL platform where they can find resources and post their completed homework. At the end of term, the students are reassessed to measure their progress. Support from qualified tutors ensures students have someone they can turn to for academic guidance, build healthy study habits and routines that support constructive learning.

*We just arrived in Canada in April, so my kids need a lot of support to catch up. They bonded with the tutor quite quickly. My daughter is especially excited to learn and has made great progress in her English. She's now doing her homework by herself. My son started at level 1, he was struggling the most, and now he's confident to interact with other kids at school. He has made friends which he couldn't do that because of his limitation with the language. So, the Homework Club has helped immensely and we're very happy with it. We didn't want online tutoring at first but with this tutor it's working out fine.*



## Impact

Participants Served: 40 students were enrolled in the spring of 2024 and 33 students were enrolled in the program in the fall of 2024.

We conducted an analysis of our students' progress last fall with the following findings:

- 79% of all students in math had progressed
- 76% of all students in English had progressed
- 32% and 27% had made significant progress in math and English respectively

## Success Story

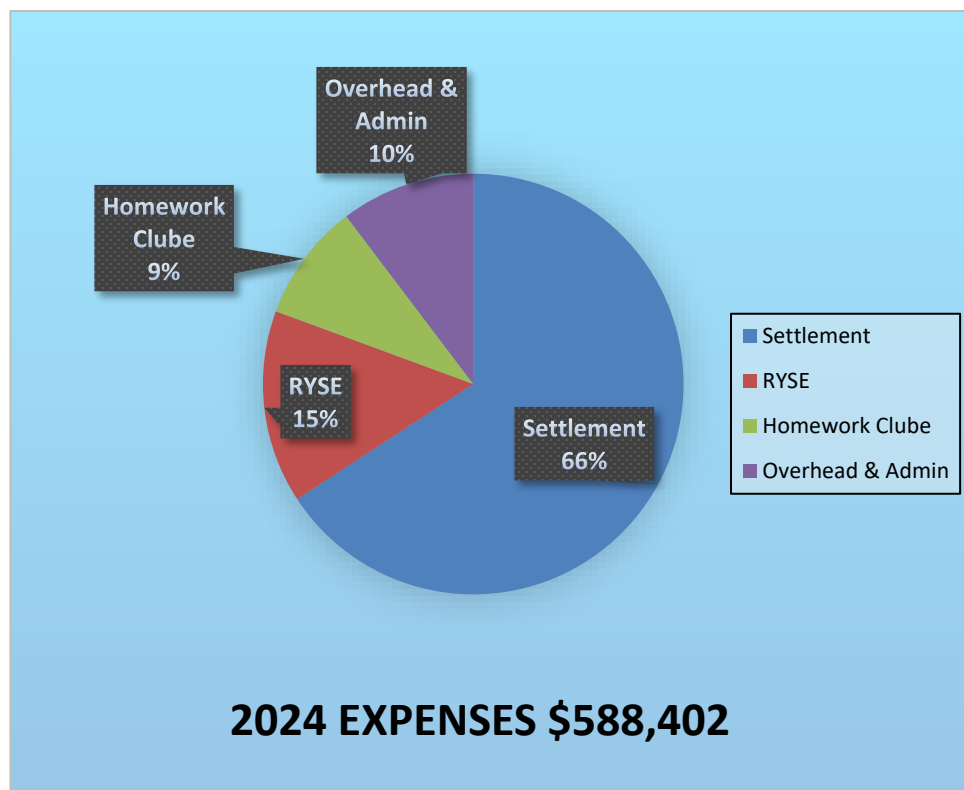
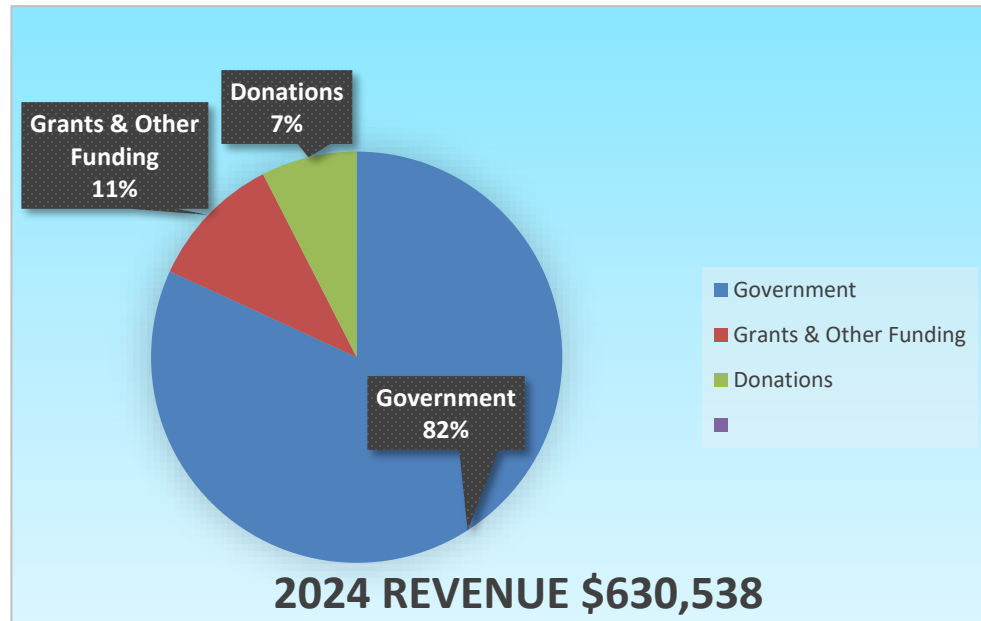
*"Midya [grade 6] was struggling with spelling at the start of the school year in 2022, which was causing her English Language Arts (ELA) overall level to fall below her grade level on IXL. We concentrated on spelling during our tutoring sessions by practicing spelling by auditory, visual and kinesthetic exercises, and I also assigned weekly spelling quizzes to Midya on IXL. By taking these steps, Midya overcame her struggle with spelling and her ELA overall level is currently at a 680 score on IXL, 290 points over her initial score of 390. Midya is currently at her grade level with her spelling skills."*

## Care Packages

Throughout the pandemic, Project Abraham, in partnership with Family Services York Region (FSYR), delivered care packages to the Yezidi community twice per month. These care packages were composed of many different items including gift cards, food items, cleaning products, and toys.

We're happy to share that over 2024, this program was modified to focus on the distribution of gift cards. With the support of Family Services York Region, we were able to help families experiencing food insecurity.

# Financials



## Our Board of Directors

Thank you to:  
Anat Wertheim, Board Chair  
Mohamed Irshad, Treasurer  
Emmanuel Didier  
Alan Frank  
Deborah Glatter  
David Kornhauser  
Noah Morris  
Ellen Passmore  
David Taylor

## Our Staff & Volunteers

Thank you to our incredible staff, our YES! teachers and our Homework Club tutors. Your passion, drive and dedication made all our accomplishments in 2024 possible.

Thank you to our generous volunteers who donate their time to support our programs, our events and so much more. We truly couldn't manage without you!

## Our Funders

Funded by:

Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada

Funded by  
The Regional  
Municipality of York



**TD READY  
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# Our Founder & Patron

Irving Weisdorf, PFC Souvenirs

## Our Donors & Supporters



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# Looking ahead to 2025...

## Strategic Planning

Work is underway on an updated Strategic Plan which will help us chart our direction for the next two years.

## Outreach

The team has added outreach to their to-do lists. We are meeting with members of community organizations to share the details of our programs and solicit referrals. We're also posting information on social media and on our website. We hope you'll be seeing more of Project Abraham on social media in the coming months.



## Volunteer Engagement

COVID has had a lasting impact on our volunteer base. We're delighted that starting in April, 2025, we have been funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada for a parttime Volunteer Coordinator. One of our new programs, the Study Squad, will rely on volunteers to develop and deliver the program.

The Study Squad will offer virtual webinars to secondary school students to help them succeed academically. Some of the topics we'll be covering are: Developing Study Habits, Exam Preparation, Developing Resilience and Essay Writing.

If you know of someone who would enjoy getting involved in creating and/or delivering this program, please email [HelenLatimer@ProjectAbraham.ca](mailto:HelenLatimer@ProjectAbraham.ca)



[www. projectabraham.ca](http://www.projectabraham.ca)

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