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PROJECT ABRAHAM 2025

# ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

## Our Mission

Project Abraham walks alongside Yezidi refugees and other survivors of war, persecution, and genocide as they rebuild their lives in the Greater Toronto Area. Our work is survivor-centred, dignity-first, and grounded in long-term relationships rather than short-term rescue. The families we support are the agents of their own recovery. We are honoured to walk with them, and with the partners who make that walk possible.



## A Year of Walking Together

### A message from Helen and David

2025 asked a lot of us. Federal funding for newcomer services was cut late in 2024, and we entered the year with a significantly reduced IRCC allocation. Our YES! English Language Classes, Homework Club, Study Squad, and Information and Orientation services were

renewed. Our Needs and Assets Assessment and Referral Services (NAARS) were

not.

And then, in the middle of that contraction, 99 people arrived in our community under the Yezidi Family Reunification Program. Many of them children. None of them with dedicated reunification funding attached. The need grew at exactly the moment the resources shrank.

We could not have met that moment on our own. We did not have to.

What got us through 2025 was partnership. CultureLink and JIAS Toronto picked up referral pathways alongside us when NAARS ended, so that families with the highest needs did not fall through the gap. Family Services of York Region, CAMH, and Redbird Therapy stood with us in the RYSE program, sharing expertise, and time. Rabco Foodservice Ltd packed 17 kitchen boxes across two shipments for newly arrived families. Brands for Canada provided needed donations at just the right time. The Career Foundation helped us reach youth through Study Squad. The Ontario Trillium Foundation, CN, the TD Ready Commitment, the J. Armand Bombardier Foundation, the Bernstein Foundation, and Rotary Toronto-Eglinton chose to keep walking with us. And the community walked too: \$16,450 raised through Ride for Refuge, \$21,100 through Giving Tuesday, and countless individual gifts that made the year possible.

Most of all, the women, men, and young people we support kept showing up. Learning English in small classes. Bringing their children to tutoring sessions. Sitting in a circle in a RYSE women's empowerment workshop and finding the words for what they have carried.

This report is a thank you to all of them. It is also an honest look at what we built together in 2025, and what 2026 will ask of us.

With warmth and gratitude,

**Helen Latimer**, Executive Director

**David Taylor**, Chair, Board of Directors

# Our 2025 in Numbers

A year of growing need, met by a growing community of partners.

<b>168</b> new adults welcomed	<b>223</b> existing clients	<b>99</b> reunification arrivals
<b>79</b> women and youth in RYSE	<b>47</b> Homework Club students	<b>11</b> Next Step graduates
<b>377</b> Information & Orientation activities	<b>30</b> active volunteers	<b>500+</b> volunteer hours

70% of the clients we welcomed in 2025 are women. The top three countries of origin were Iraq, Iran, and Mexico.

## The Year We Walked Through

Through 2025, more families arrived under the federal Yezidi Family Reunification Program, and we quickly reached capacity. Working closely with JIAS Toronto, COSTI, and Family Services of York Region, we held monthly coordination meetings to share information and make sure no family was missed and no service was duplicated.

Many of the women and youth arriving carry experiences of genocide, displacement, and prolonged trauma. Our program evaluations told us what we already heard from people every day: 47% of participants reported having no strong support system, while only 20% felt their support was strong. 80% identified language as the primary barrier to accessing services. Transportation and childcare were the next two.

Yezidi newcomers in York Region face a specific set of barriers. Very few mental health clinicians are familiar with Yezidi history, cultural norms, or collective trauma. There is a severe shortage of Kurmanji-speaking, trauma-informed interpreters. Short-term therapeutic models do not meet the depth or duration of care that long-term recovery asks for.

Project Abraham sits in the gap between formal settlement services and long-term community-led support. That gap can only be filled by the kind of partnerships we describe in this report.





## The People Who Walk With Us

In 2025, partnership was not an add-on. It was how the work happened. When NAARS funding ended, our settlement colleagues at CultureLink and JIAS Toronto built shared referral pathways with us so no family slipped through the gap. When 99 reunification arrivals stretched our capacity in months, Family Services of York Region, JIAS and COSTI helped ensure no newcomer was overlooked and no services were duplicated. When women in our RYSE women’s empowerment program needed counselling, Redbird Therapy was a phone call away. When kitchens needed to be stocked, Rabco Foodservice Ltd packed boxes.

Below is the constellation of organizations who walked alongside us this year. Each name represents real coordination, often weekly, often quietly, and always

essential.

### Settlement and Coordination Partners

Partner	How we walked together in 2025
JIAS Toronto	Wraparound case management for new Yezidi arrivals, shared workshop delivery, and 49 client referrals into Project Abraham programs.
CultureLink	Referral pathway for high-needs families after NAARS ended, with 47 clients connected to our programs through our shared intake process.
COSTI	Joint coordination on Yezidi Family Reunification arrivals, including information sharing and service alignment.
Family Services of York Region	Co-delivery of educational workshops on well-being and self-care, interpretation support, and targeted client referrals.

## Mental Health and Wellness Partners

Partner	How we walked together in 2025
CAMH	Trauma-informed care training for our team, and a referral pathway for clients with complex mental health needs.
Redbird Therapy	Short-term individual and family counselling for clients referred from RYSE and our settlement team.

## Community and Resource Partners

Partner	How we walked together in 2025
The Career Foundation	Outreach to newcomer youth and a partnership pathway for our Study Squad program.
Rabco Foodservice Ltd	Two shipments totalling 17 kitchen packages for newly arrived reunification families, helping them start cooking in their own homes from day one.
Brands for Canada	Multiple donations across the year, helping us respond to clothing needs as families arrived and as seasons changed.

## Funders Who Made the Year Possible

Funder	Investment in 2025
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)	Core multi-year funding for YES! English Language Classes, Study Squad, and Information and Orientation.
Ontario Trillium Foundation	Three-year Grow Grant of \$172,800 to launch Next Step, our workplace communication program.
Regional Municipality of York	Funding for the RYSE program, supporting Yezidi women and youth through mental health and wellness workshops.
TD Ready Commitment	Renewed three-year funding of \$225,000 for the Homework Club.
CN	\$30,000 to expand RYSE women's empowerment programming.
Rotary Toronto-Eglinton	Additional support for the Homework Club.
The Bernstein Foundation	Continued support for our community work and English language classes.
J. Armand Bombardier Foundation	Multi-year capacity building support.
Ride for Refuge and Giving Tuesday community donors	\$16,450 raised through Ride for Refuge and \$21,100 raised through Giving Tuesday, plus volunteer hours and shared storytelling that reached new audiences.

## Coming Together in Person: August Client Appreciation Picnic

In August 2025, we held a client appreciation picnic to thank the families who walk this journey with us, and to bring together the wider community that makes the work possible. The day was a chance to step out of programs and into something simpler: shared food, kids playing, conversation across tables.



To celebrate our funding award from Ontario Trillium Foundation, we were grateful to welcome MPP Logan Kanapathi and the Honourable Michael Parsa. Representatives from IRCC, Rotary Toronto-Eglinton, and members of our own Board of Directors joined in the celebrations. Their presence mattered. For families who have lived in the gap between policy and lived experience, having decision-makers, funders, and board members show up in person, in a relaxed setting, is its own form of partnership.

## Ride for Refuge

Ride for Refuge was one of the highlights of our 2025 community calendar. Together, our riders, donors, and supporters raised \$16,450 for Project Abraham, with strong leadership from our Board of Directors and wonderful support from BNI High Park, whose members showed up in numbers and helped grow the team's reach. Primrose Bagels generously donated food for the day, which made the morning warmer in every sense.

Ride for Refuge is the kind of event that reminds us why we do this work. Families, board members, business partners, and friends, side by side, riding in support of newcomers rebuilding their lives in Canada. Lots of fun. Real community. Real impact.



## Giving Tuesday

On Giving Tuesday 2025, community donors gave \$21,100 to Project Abraham, our largest single-day fundraising result of the year. Every gift, large or small, helped close the gap between what funded programs cover and what families actually need: a kitchen package on the day of arrival, a winter coat, a tutor for a child who is finally starting to enjoy school, an extra hour of settlement support for a mother navigating Ontario Works.

To everyone who gave on Giving Tuesday: thank you. This is your work too.

## YES! English Language Classes

### *Small classes, steady progress, and a foundation for what comes next*

Even with reduced funded hours and a restructured teaching team, YES! continued to deliver small-group, trauma-informed English instruction with four to six students per class, led by experienced TESL-certified instructors. In 2025, 87 students continued with the program and 61 new students joined, with referrals growing especially among Iranian newcomers.

### *What students told us*

- 95% reported improved English-speaking skills
- 85% reported improved social confidence
- 98% were satisfied with their instructor
- 93% were satisfied with the program overall

*"I liked the size of the group. Compared with regular school, 30 people. Here it is 5 or 6, it is good because the teacher can give attention."*

**YES! participant**

*"We share things with each other about our lives and ideas for jobs, schools for our children. It is good for me."*

**YES! participant**

### *From a YES! student*

*"The lessons at Project Abraham with teacher Fereshteh were incredibly inspiring, high-quality, positive and friendly. The atmosphere in our classes was very warm and I always looked forward to the weekends so I could join the lessons and be part of this positive and nurturing space. When we started our classes, I could barely speak English, but now I speak much more confidently. My vocabulary has grown significantly. And what is most valuable is that the words and phrases we learned come from everyday life, which really helps me adapt here in Canada. I am truly happy as a student at this school and having Fereshteh as my teacher. I am deeply grateful for this experience of my life."*

**YES! student**

YES! also became the foundation for what came next. Through Ontario Trillium Foundation funding, we launched Next Step, integrating workplace communication skills into our language pathway, so that learning English connects directly to working in Canada.

## Next Step: Workplace Communication

### *From classroom confidence to workplace confidence*

Launched in Fall 2025 with three-year support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation Grow Grant of \$172,800, Next Step is a 12-week program focused on workplace norms, communication, and employment readiness. The first cohort welcomed 10 participants. The curriculum covers workplace communication strategies, interview preparation, navigating feedback, and the cultural norms of Canadian workplaces.

We expected participants to grow their communication skills. The most significant outcome turned out to be something else: the restoration of confidence.

*“When I started this program, I was afraid to speak with my coworkers. After this program, I can speak and explain things better.”*

**Next Step graduate**

*“Staying at home for a long time affects you. You start to lose your confidence, especially as a newcomer in a new country.”*

**Next Step graduate**

*“This program helped renew my knowledge and rebuild my confidence.”*

**Next Step graduate**

### **A graduate's story**

One of our first participants is a working architect at a firm in Toronto. Over the 12 weeks, she reported speaking up more often in team and project meetings, and feeling more confident asking questions. By the time she graduated, she shared that she was being assigned to more challenging projects and was preparing to apply for a promotion.

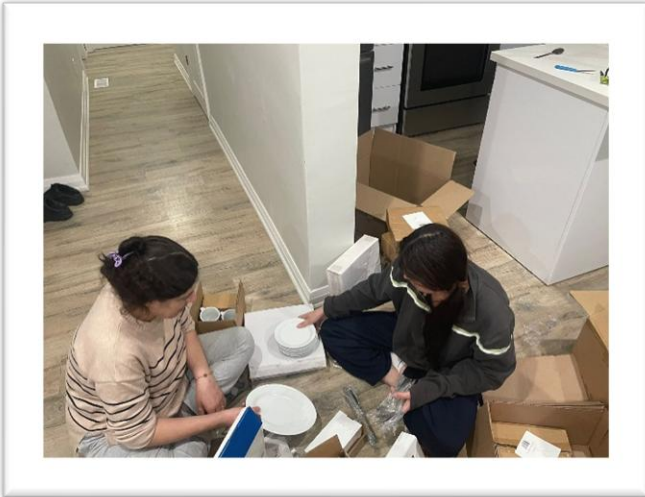


## Settlement and Reunification Support

### *Holding the safety net together when one strand fell away*

When NAARS funding ended, we did not have the option of leaving high-needs families without coordinated support. Together with CultureLink and JIAS Toronto, we built collaborative referral pathways to preserve service continuity, so that a family arriving in 2025 still had a real route to help.

With 99 reunification arrivals over the year, our team held weekly coordination meetings with JIAS, COSTI, and Family Services of York Region. We hired an 8-hour-per-week settlement contractor through philanthropic funding. We distributed Walmart gift cards to 15 families. With Rabco Foodservice Ltd, we coordinated two shipments of kitchen packages, 17 in total, so that newly arrived households could start cooking in their own homes.



Our settlement team, including a part-time client support worker focused exclusively on the Yezidi community, supported 40 to 50 families at any one time, many with high needs. 75 clients received Information and Orientation services through the year.

The demands were significant. Service quality did not decline. That was a team effort, and it was a partnership effort.

## **RYSE: Reaching Yezidi Support and Empowerment**

### ***Mental health, connection, and belonging, built with partners***

Many of the Yezidi and other refugee women who join RYSE arrive in Canada after experiencing war, displacement, and persecution. Social isolation, language barriers, and stigma around mental health can make it difficult to access support. RYSE helps women rebuild confidence, strengthen family relationships, access community resources, and develop supportive peer networks.

RYSE is not a Project Abraham program alone. It is held together by a network of partners, each bringing what they do best.

### ***Who walks with us in RYSE***

- JIAS Toronto co-delivered workshops and offered wraparound case management for Yezidi arrivals.
- Family Services of York Region co-led wellness workshops and provided interpretation.
- CAMH offered a referral pathway for participants needing more specialized support.
- Redbird Therapy provided short-term individual and family counselling for participants referred through the program.

In 2025, 79 women and youth participated across multiple workshop series focused on stress management, wellness, and community navigation.

### ***What participants told us***

- 92% learned new techniques for managing stress
- 60% felt confident or very confident finding community services
- 73% felt more comfortable asking for help from service providers

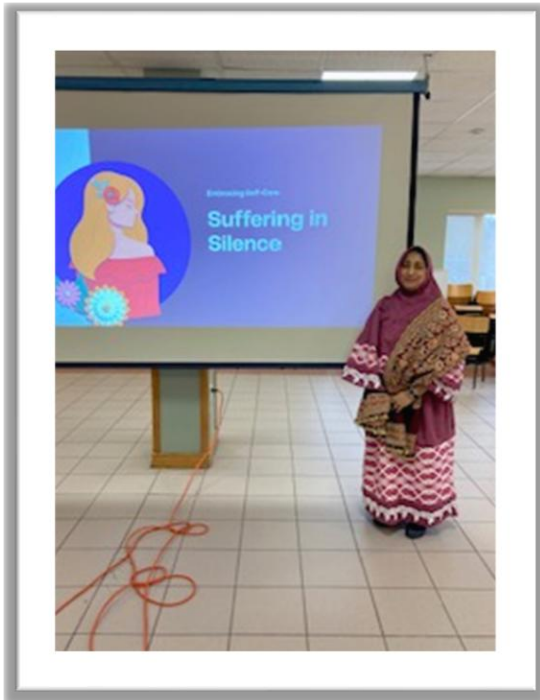
- 85% were satisfied with the workshops overall
- 77% expressed interest in attending future programming

*“This program helped me to get a sense of connection because I feel alone and isolated at home. It was very helpful to get connected with my Yezidi women friends to know what they are doing.”*

**RYSE participant**

*“Sometimes I get stressed with many people, however, I felt safe in this setting of the group.”*

**RYSE participant**



### ***A story from the year***

One participant, a recent arrival under the federal Yezidi Family Reunification Program, shared that she is now able to express her emotions and speak with confidence within the workshop space, something she had never been able to do in Iraq because of oppression by majority groups. Her story is a small picture of what emotional safety in a group can do over a few weeks.

## **The Homework Club**

***One tutor, one student, and a lot of partners standing behind them***

With renewed three-year funding from the TD Ready Commitment (\$225,000) and additional support from

Rotary Toronto-Eglinton, the Homework Club continued to offer free, one-to-one tutoring for newcomer children from kindergarten through Grade 12. By the end of 2025, 47 students were enrolled.

This year we expanded the program to include science tutoring, alongside the existing English and math curricula. Using the IXL Learning platform, each student is assessed at intake, given an individual learning plan, and reassessed to measure their progress. Four new tutors joined the team, including specialists in ESL and STEM, with two more being recruited.

### ***Results, September to November 2025***

- 37 of 39 students improved in math

- 41 of 45 students improved in English; 6 students are enrolled in ESL as they have little exposure to English
- 255 skills mastered, 303 skills proficient, 562 skills practiced
- Approximately 34% of students require intensive literacy support

*"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 is now doing her homework by herself."*

**Parent of a Homework Club student**

Another parent shared that their child now answers math questions confidently after struggling for years. Parents tell us, often, that homework time at home has gone from a source of stress to a source of pride.

### ***A tutor's story: from 35% to 90%***

One of our Homework Club students was struggling with the Grade 10 academic-level math course. Even after seeking extra help from her teacher, she could not get the one-to-one support she needed. She finished the course with a 35%. That grade took a toll, not just on her transcript but on her belief in her own capacity.

She decided to take the course again in summer school, and she came to the Homework Club for the support she had not been able to find in the classroom. Her tutor used a particular approach: after teaching a concept, she asked the student to play the role of the teacher and explain her thinking out loud, step by step. The tutor would clarify, correct, and encourage.

After a month of structured lessons and serious effort, the student finished the course with 90%, compared to a class average of 64%. She received "excellent" across the board for her learning skills. What changed was her math grade, yes, but more than that, her confidence, motivation, and focus.

*Story shared by Natalie, Homework Club tutor*

## **Study Squad**

### ***Building youth leadership, one workshop at a time***

Launched with funding from IRCC, Study Squad is a series of volunteer-led, group-based workshops covering academic skills that newcomer youth need for success in secondary school and beyond. Topics in 2025 included study skills and time management, applying for scholarships and bursaries, and presentation skills.

### ***What we built in 2025***

- Formalized the program structure, including clear volunteer roles.
- Developed a trauma-informed, culturally relevant curriculum tailored to newcomer youth.
- Recruited and onboarded a volunteer team.

Participant recruitment was a challenge in the early months. Our partnership with The Career Foundation, alongside our network of volunteer youth ambassadors, is now strengthening reach. Study Squad reflects our long-term commitment to youth resilience, academic success, and leadership.

## **Building Stronger Foundations**

### ***The infrastructure behind the work***

In a year that asked us to do more with less, we also chose to invest in the underlying capacity that lets us keep doing the work for the long term.

- Deeper partnerships enriched our programs and made sure clients were supported, even where our own funding had been reduced.
- Our YES! teachers transitioned to employee status, strengthening workforce stability and supporting retention.
- HubSpot CRM was implemented for client management, improving how we track and serve relationships over time.
- Our 2024 annual audit was completed, and all filings were submitted on time.
- Staff participated in trauma-informed care training with CAMH.
- Our Strategic Plan refresh began, with community consultation built into the process.
- Data collection and reporting processes were improved, strengthening program evaluation and funder reporting.

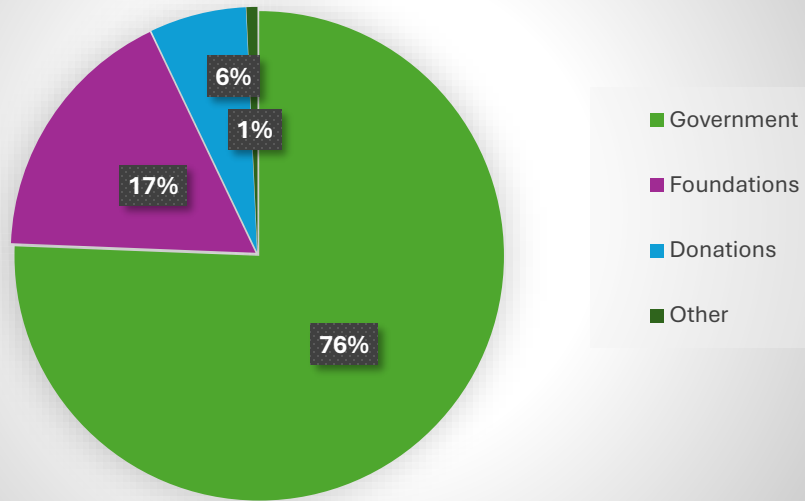
## **Financial Overview**

### ***A more diverse funding base, by design***

2025 required disciplined financial management. Government funding declined, while philanthropy and grants expanded. Our 2025 revenue sources included IRCC, the Regional Municipality of York Community Investment Fund, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, CN Foundation, the TD Ready Commitment, Rotary Toronto-Eglinton, the J. Armand Bombardier Foundation, and individual donors and community fundraising.

This diversification is not just a hedge against risk. It is how we build longer-term sustainability and protect our independence to serve the community well.

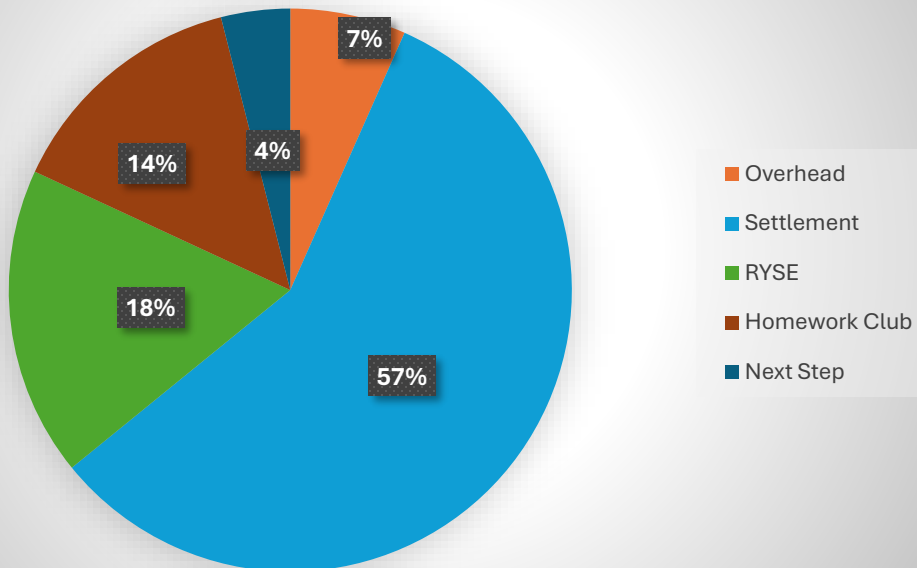
## 2025 Revenue \$696,216



Revenue in 2025 \$696,216 vs \$630,538 in 2024, a 10% increase.

Expenses in 2025 \$622,869 vs \$588,402 in 2024, a 5.9% increase.

## 2025 Expenses \$622,869



## Looking Ahead to 2026

In 2026, we will continue Next Step workplace programming with second and third cohorts. We will advocate for sustainable settlement funding at the federal and provincial levels. We will deepen our youth engagement through Study Squad and Homework Club. And we will implement our refreshed Strategic Plan, shaped by community consultation.

In January 2026, we received news that York Region would not renew their funding for RYSE. The program continues in 2026 thanks to CN, while we work to secure new funding to keep this trusted space open for Yezidi women and youth. IRCC also announced additional cuts of 4% for 2026, while adding a fourth year to our current funding agreement.

The need remains significant. Our commitment, and our community of partners, remains steadfast.

## Our 2025 Board of Directors

David Taylor, Board Chair

Mohammed Irshad, Treasurer

Emmanuel Didier, Director

Alan Frank, Director

Dalzar Tawfeeq, Director

Deborah Glatter, Director

Petra Kukacka, Director

Ellen Passmore, Director

Noah Morris, Director

Kyle Grooms, Director

## Our Staff and Volunteers

To our staff, our YES! teachers, RYSE facilitator and our Homework Club tutors: thank you. Your passion, drive, and dedication made everything in this report possible.

To our volunteers, who donated their time in 2025 to support our programs, our events, and the small daily moments in between: we are very lucky to have you.

## Our Funders and Supporters

With deep gratitude to:

- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Regional Municipality of York Community Investment Fund
- TD Ready Commitment
- CN
- Rotary Toronto-Eglinton
- The Bernstein Foundation
- J. Armand Bombardier Foundation
- OCASI
- CAMH
- JIAS Toronto
- CultureLink
- COSTI
- Family Services of York Region
- York Region Transit
- Redbird Therapy
- The Career Foundation
- Rabco Foodservice Ltd
- Brands for Canada
- BNI High Park
- Primrose Bagels
- Studeo
- Our Ride for Refuge and Giving Tuesday donors, and every individual donor who chose to walk with us this year

## Project Abraham

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

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