The Sanctuary Students Solidarity and Support Collective

ANNUAL REPORT

2020
2021

Welcome!

The Sanctuary Students Solidarity and Support Collective (S4) was formed in the fall of 2018 to address several challenges identified by precarious migrant and newcomer students (Sanctuary Students) at the threshold of post-secondary education in Ontario. Our main objectives are to support sanctuary students with navigating various levels of education in Ontario; and to support programs and institutions to increase equitable access for these populations. As such, the group works to identify and respond to ongoing and emerging barriers that prevent the full and equitable participation of sanctuary students in existing educational institutions.

We meet on a weekly basis, and members participating in the collective have described feeling more connected, supported and equipped with important knowledge and skill-sets. While we continue to grow, we recognize that there is a long road ahead…

OUR VISION

A world in which immigration status is not a barrier to accessing meaningful and equitable education

S4 COLLECTIVE

OUR MISSION

Increase equitable access to education for sanctuary students in Canada by fostering community-led support, solidarity and capacity building

What we've been up to...

MEETING CONSISTENTLY EVERY WEEK DURING THE PANDEMIC

Our meetings continued as scheduled (Tuesday @ 6:30 pm) via ZOOM during the COVID-19 pandemic. We were able to create plenty of activities, workshops, and games despite not having the physical space to gather. We even welcomed new members, whom we look forward to eventually meeting in person. We would like to thank all of our members for their enthusiasm and patience while transitioning to our cyberspace! This transition also allowed our creativity to shine as we invented several new games to keep us laughing and create connection, even across virtual space. From "Who are you looking at" to "What Vegetable Would You Be", we are not only learning more about each other, but also enjoying some lighter moments.

Sponsored by Equitas! Emma Litschko and Elizabeth Barrera worked together with Indigenous youth across the GTA to explore what love means to each participating artist. Poems, photographs, recipes, and sculptures were submitted to the zine which was published in both a virtual and physical medium. You can find it on the S4 Collective website under "Love in Indigenous Languages Zine".

ANOTHER HOLIDAY WITH THE S4 COLLECTIVE!

This was a jolly night filled with lots of games, fun, and food. We were able to send members SkipTheDishes gift cards and host a virtual dinner party.
A special thanks to Brantella Williams and Vernetta Avril for their fun activities.

PICNIC (LAST SEPTEMBER)

With the easing of COVID restrictions during the summer of 2020, we decided to take an opportunity for a physically distanced get-together in August to see each other in person for the first time in five months (and for some members, it was the first time!). We had a very well-attended picnic in Riverside Park with food provided by Groundswell funding. We played some games, shared some stories and enjoyed each other's company (at a safe distance). We hope to have a second annual park picnic this summer.

and Introducing...

"*The Unsettled Settler*" podcast is a community effort led by our members that seek to explore the various intersections between Indigenous and Migrant-led movements in order to establish a sense of solidarity, allyship, and partnership. We aim to look at Canada's history and current policies through an anti-colonial, anti-racist, and critical lens. Before recording our podcast, we were lucky enough to welcome Serisha Iyar, ED of Living in Colour, to share her extensive podcasting knowledge. Her tips were invaluable to get us going!

Vince Wong Workshop

We invited Vincent Wong into our space to present his research on the history of racial capitalism in Canadian immigration. Vince is a present member of the law community in Toronto, having worked and advocated along with the Southeast Asian Legal Clinic for sex worker rights, migrant rights, affordable housing, and police accountability. Vince's research focuses on how the Canadian state seeks to marginalize BIPOC workers in order to maintain a capitalistic landscape that profits off of precarious (and often racist) labour. His presentation inspired a lot of critical questions and a fascinating discussion.

Workshops (Summer/Fall 2020)

Accumulating a total of 15 workshops, S4 Collective members led and created educational panels in relation to COVID-19 and its multidimensional effect in our communities. This included topics such as healthy eating habits, online facilitation, safe dating, conflict resolution, mindfulness, Indigenous medicines (in Turtle Island), succeeding in online school, and many more! Our members got to show off their research and presentation skills and we all learned a lot! (Funded by the Canadian Red Cross COVID-19 Emergency Response for Non-Profits).

WHAT'S NEXT WORKSHOP

One of our most anticipated annual events! The S4 Collective hosted our second "What's Next Workshop", where we invited youth who are currently facing precarious status and in their final year of high school to join our talks about the possible pathways towards access to post-secondary education. We explored the York program, community-based learning, and the various activities that the S4 Collective is engaged in! What's more important, we let the youth know they are not alone when facing their personal hurdles.

SANCTUARY STUDENT UNITE! EXPLORING THE LAW (AND ITS LIMITS) IN OUR LIVES

The main objective of this project is to build S4 members' knowledge of their rights and their capacity to enact them in different contexts. We have collectively determined the guiding principles for this work, and the values and priorities for the community we are building. We also collectively identified our priority issues and legal concerns considering different areas of law. Interactive workshops are now being created in collaboration with Swathi Sekhar to deliver legal information and allow workshop participants to work through how they can use this information in different situations. The information being developed will also be turned into a toolkit that we will share with our broader communities.

(Funded by the Law Foundation of Ontario)

SANCTUARY: WHAT'S NEXT? AN INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR, WITH AND BY UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

The S4 Collective members participated in two panels discussing current immigration policies and their impacts on themes such as education and access to healthcare. We advocated for barrier-free access to social services and exchanged ideas about what can be done to provide a wider platform for folks who are facing precarious status. Along with WeBelong and Citizens UK, we explored the challenges faced by students facing precarious status and discussed advocacy efforts, learning from and inspiring each other. This is the first time we were invited to participate in an international event! (Available on the (X) University website: https://www.ryerson.ca/law/news-events/2020/11/access-to-education-for-undocumented-residents-in-cities/).

VACCINE WORKSHOP

The COVID-19 vaccines have raised a lot of questions in our communities, especially among people facing precarious status. On April 27th we teamed up with Vivimos Juntxs Comemos Juntxs to offer a workshop sharing information about the vaccines, debunking myths and explaining where people can safely access them. This collaborative workshop brought together many different people and allowed folks to share their experiences and concerns. People were also able to direct each other to safer vaccine sites for those who do not have OHIP. A community doctor, Dr. Arnold Aberman, was present to explain how the vaccines work and answer questions about them (he is also, conveniently, Tanya's dad).

MAC'S WORKSHOP

The increased policing and surveillance during the COVID-19 lockdown and stay-at-home orders raised many questions and instigated a lot of fear for many people, especially those affected by precarious status. We were very grateful to have Mac Scott join us to explain what the regulations really meant, what people's rights are and how to keep ourselves and each other safe in these difficult times. Thanks, Mac!

YORK WORKSHOPS

Various members of the collective created and led a virtual orientation that welcomed the new York students in the Sanctuary Scholars program. Information on course selection, campus resources, purchasing textbooks, and various other useful tips were shared among the students. The orientation was offered to incoming students in the fall (2020) and winter (2021) semesters.

ADVOCACY AT UOFT

Alongside all of our other projects, we continue to advocate for increased access to education for students facing precarious status. Tanya has worked closely with a very dedicated committee of faculty, staff and students at the University of Toronto for the last three years to convince the administration to increase access. Everyone's hard work and commitment has to lead to some great discussions and steps forward, but we still wait for the commitment from the university to see precarious status students admitted.

PRESENTATIONS - UOFT AND CCVT

We have also had the opportunity over the last year to present our group and our work in different environments. We were invited by the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) to share with their youth group and talk about pathways for accessing education. We were also invited to a UofT Social Work class taught by Professor Rupaleem Bhuyan to talk about our activism and our approach to community building. Both experiences gave us great opportunities to share who we are, what we do, answer interesting questions and meet great new people!

Let's take a look at some of our financials during this past year

INCOME	AMOUNT
DONATIONS	$ 4,100.00
GRANTS	$ 24,214.00
TOTAL	$ 28,314.00

EXPENSES	
SALARY	$ 8,675.00
HONRARIA FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS	$ 3,600.00
INTERNET COSTS FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS	$ 2,528.74
FOOD	$ 1,175.00
ADMINISTRATION	$ 1,484.48
TOTAL	$ 17,463.22

SURPLUS/CARRY OVER FOR 2021 $ 10,850.78

* Remaining funds needed for Groundswell and LFO 2020-2021 projects