



SUMMER CAMP 2022

This year, we were finally able to offer Yezidi children the opportunity to attend a 2-week summer camp at the York Region District School Board's Summer Institute. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, Summer Camp was only available virtually in 2020 and not at all in 2021. We raised enough money to sponsor the first week and YRDSB funded the second week.

The children traveled by bus to and from Crosby Heights Public School, where they spent each day engaged in such activities as arts and crafts, music, sports, and theater. Supervised trips to local splash parks gave them a chance to cool off on hot days.



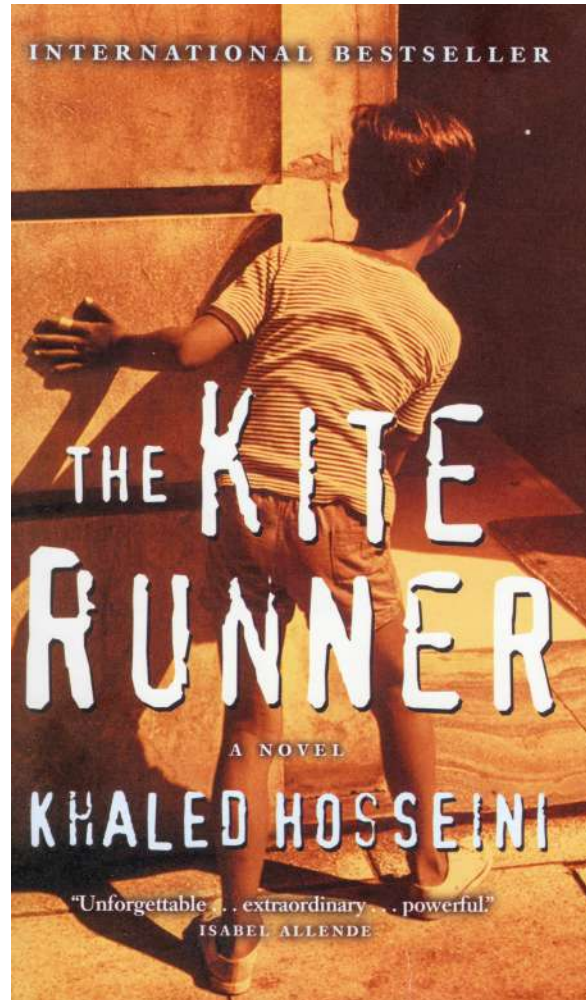
One mother said that her son reported, "It's not like school. We just do fun things there." She appreciated the time to herself while her children were busy at camp. Another mother said that her kids "loved it so much." Her daughter particularly enjoyed painting and going on nature walks. She believes that attending summer camp helped prepare her son for entering Grade 1 in the fall. While her children were in camp, she used the time to attend ESL summer school. The bus service made it very convenient. Both families intend to sign up again next year.

Our vision is to become the leading resettlement organization supporting victims of persecution, empowering them to create a future for themselves and their children as fully integrated Canadian citizens.

Donations are gratefully accepted: [projectabraham/donate](https://projectabraham.org/donate)

YEZIDI EDUCATION SUPPORT (YES!) PROGRAM EXPANDS TO OTHER COMMUNITIES

The success of our Yezidi Education Support (YES!) program has led to the expansion of the service beyond the Yezidis to other communities in need. Debbie Rose, Executive Director of Project Abraham, says that approximately 39% of the students currently enrolled are from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Ukraine, and African countries. One of these groups is the Hazaras, whose persecution in Afghanistan is depicted in Khaled Hosseini's best-selling novel, *The Kite Runner*.



We launched the program in 2020 to provide customized educational support to Yezidi survivors. The curriculum focuses on English as well as basic numeracy and computer literacy skills for everyday living. The program features small classes held a few hours per week, with flexible scheduling and individualized lesson plans developed and taught by qualified ESL teachers.

With the expansion of the program, referrals come from caseworkers, the York Region District School Board, CAMH, friends and family, and staff members. To be eligible, students must be permanent residents who would have difficulty succeeding in a regular government-sponsored English language program (such as LINC) because of barriers to learning such as trauma, lack of prior education, and learning disabilities. Through donations, we provide students with Chromebooks to assist them with their studies. The aim of the 3-year program is to facilitate a smooth transition into Canadian society and ensure that no newcomer gets left behind.

Project Abraham provides settlement services, education, counselling, and other support services for immigrants and refugees in need.

Get to Know the Team at Project Abraham

We are fortunate to have **Paulette Khatchatourian** as one of our five YES! Program teachers. Paulette started in 2020, when the program began. She currently teaches classes to students in their 30s and 40s in Richmond Hill, Kleinberg, and Toronto, as well as in London via Zoom.



Paulette has been a language instructor for newcomers to Canada since 2004, working in community settings and for not-for-profit organizations. She has found working with students with special needs and from vulnerable communities, especially women who have been through trauma, to be a “life-changing experience. I learn so much from my clients. I’m inspired by how invested they are in improving their skills and their lives.”

The learning challenges that YES! Program students face are daunting. Only a fraction of them had an elementary level education before they came to Canada, and this is the first time that they are working with a pencil, eraser or ruler, let alone a Chromebook, which we provide to each student.

Some students have previously undiagnosed learning disabilities, such as dyslexia. Most are dealing with health issues related to severe trauma. These can range from migraines to psychogenic blackouts - temporary loss of consciousness due to mental pressure and stress. If this happens during a class, Paulette alerts a family member or friend and stays with the student until help is available.

Paulette says that in her career as an English literacy teacher, “I have never before worked with clients who had such unique needs and challenges – for themselves and their families. But they are moving forward, setting one foot in front of the other.”