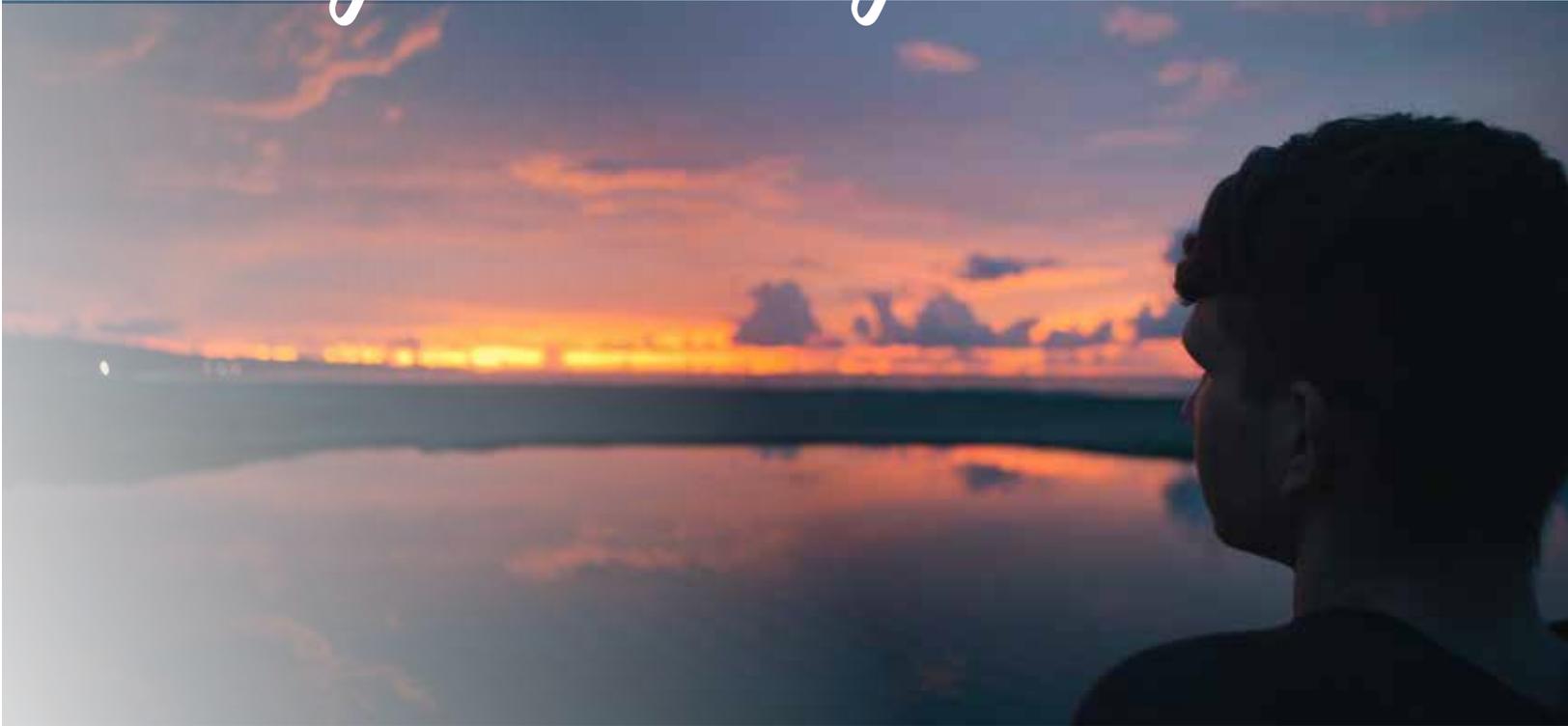


Finding Home, Again



I invite you to put yourself in a story.

Imagine a grassy shoreline that gives way to rocks, pebbles, sand, and a tumbling ocean. You've spent your life on this terrain. You know the boulders, the hard and unforgiving spots. Over time the landscape has taught you the trouble spots where harm awaits, but you've also come to know the shallows where you can wade in the warm water and get relief from the heat of a growling sun. All that it is, and all that it isn't; at least it's familiar, and it's yours.

The wind from across the ocean carries the possibility of a different life. As your world explodes the terrain beneath you gives way, you have no choice but to lunge toward a cold and unfamiliar shore. You've seen pictures of what's to come. You've spoken with friends and family who've made the journey. You've done all you can to prepare with what little you have. Unfortunately, there isn't enough time to process the inevitable feelings of fear, loss, and uncertainty that come with having to leave your home.

All IRCOM families share a version of this story.

Thankfully, these stories not only open eyes but also warm hearts. When we put ourselves in the shoes

of newcomers and walk their turbulent shores, we reconnect with our shared humanity. I know this to be true, because during my time here, IRCOM has welcomed thousands of newcomers.

These hallways have heard thousands of stories over 28 years. Stories of loss, isolation, and disconnection – the hardships that mark the lives of many migrants. There are also stories of healing, renewal, and new beginnings – sadly these stories rarely see the light of day.

Our newsletter aims to shine a light on these stories.

Finding Home, Again will bring to life the stories of newcomer families, providing a platform to share the narrative of their sometimes turbulent journeys. In this journal we aim to write the story of how together, with your love, compassion, and generous support, we can create *A Community of Belonging*.



Thank You

Dorota Blumczynska,
Executive Director

Being Emad



At a quick glance, Emad looks like any other teenager, tall, lanky, into sports and hanging out with friends.

With a head of dirty blond hair and a heart-warming smile, he's the "any kid" you pass on your way to work, while grocery shopping, or walking your dog.

In school, biology is one of his favorite subjects, along with gym and art. His favourite soccer player is Cristiano Ronaldo (like every 14-year-old boy in the world), and he wants to become a lawyer when he grows up. Emad is a quirky combination of passions and potential.

Sounds like any one of a million Canadian kids his age...right?

The only thing is, Emad happens to be more than average. Emad is a survivor. Just google the words Emad, Mosul, Iraq, Winnipeg... and you'll know you've heard his story. It isn't ours to retell here.

LIFE IN WINNIPEG

After his reunion with his mother in 2017, Emad settled into a quiet life at IRCOM House. Sheltered from media, he was given the opportunity to enjoy the simplicity of family, home cooked meals, time with siblings and friends, and getting to explore his new neighbourhood. It has been a rather uneventful two years.

What's not necessarily obvious from his joyful existence, is that Emad is equally happy on the inside. He's been healing, growing, aspiring, dreaming, and imagining

what could be. This is the true story of this child. Not the turmoil he was rescued from, but the defiant spirit of a human being that refused to be broken.

"There's a beautiful moment that happens when a child – who has seen and experienced more than any child ever should – begins to see their life for what is to come and not for what was," says Dorota Blumczynska, Executive Director of IRCOM. "Looking at Emad from a distance – to honour his trials and not press him to relive his past – I am humbled to be witness to the ordinary existence being lived out by an extraordinary young man."

With a bit of time, the love of his family, and the support of community, **including donors like you**, Emad has been able to stand up, re-imagine, and begin to focus on the things important to most teenage boys in Canada: going to the beach in summer, skating in the winter, and playing video games.

When asked about his future, Emad said he wants to become a lawyer so that he can help others and support his community. He would like to travel the world, see Iraq again, and come back home to Winnipeg.

"Mostly I like that I'm with my family," says Emad. "I like that we are together."

TEACHING, LEARNING, AND SELF DISCOVERY AT IRCOM



Cynthia Okojie is a student from Nigeria with bright eyes and a warm smile. She came to Canada to pursue her education and found *A Community of Belonging* at IRCOM.

“I UNDERSTAND HOW DIFFICULT IT IS FOR PEOPLE”

“I understand how difficult it is for people to come to a new place and try to fit in, especially when they have language barriers” says Cynthia. “I felt that I would be

able to relate with people more because I understand where they’re coming from.”

Volunteering has provided Cynthia with the chance to teach kids English. She has had the opportunity to interact with students and meet people from different cultural backgrounds.

“I’ve learned to be more patient, and I’ve learned to tailor my interactions to people’s needs,” says Cynthia. “I’ve also learned cultural competence and sensitivity and to pay attention to details.”

Most importantly, Cynthia discovered a love for children.

“Working with these kids made me realize I’m actually passionate about children,” says Cynthia. She recalls how she was moved when she met a five-year-old who had raised \$3,000 for IRCOM.

“It was interesting to see how much people are willing to help others,” says Cynthia. “Regardless of your age it really doesn’t matter you just have to be willing and innovative and everything will work out.”

“I’m really grateful for the opportunity to be placed at IRCOM.”

“

I felt that I would be able to relate with people more because I understand where they’re coming from.



Immigrant and Refugee
Community Organization of Manitoba

IRCOM is home to hundreds of newcomers from around the globe. In order to transition smoothly into their new home, they need the housing and support programs that your donations provide. This newsletter is about how you are helping our newest neighbours *Find Home, Again.*

HOW YOU HELP

You help families *Find Home, Again*

Because of you families like Aleyehu Gidey, his wife, and their three children improved their standard of living and purchased much needed goods, like beds and furniture. Your support allows us to help newcomer families file their taxes, access the CCB and GST credits, helping newcomer families receive an impressive **\$4.2 million in benefits and entitlements.**



You maintain a system of support

Your generosity enables IRCOM to recruit, engage, and maintain over 250 volunteers! Volunteers assist tenants, help run events, aid teachers, care for children, and ensure the greatest successes for our families. Volunteers gave over 10,000 hours of their time and talent to newcomer families in 2018, positively contributing to the lives of immigrants and refugees.

You make child care possible

Child Care Programming that opens doors for families is made possible with your support! It's hard to overstate the importance of child care. Without it, education, training, meetings, doctor's appointments, grocery shopping, and much more can be hard to manage. You make it possible for us to deliver 1,900 hours of long-term child care for 120 infants and toddlers each year!



KEEP IN TOUCH

Become a Monthly Donor

Today!

visit www.ircom.ca and click "DONATE"

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To help IRCOM create *A Community of Belonging* visit www.ircom.ca