

25th



OTTAWA COMMUNITY LOAN FUND

ANNUAL REPORT 2024





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From the Desk of our ED



It is a bittersweet moment as I put pen to paper to write this message, as it will be my last as the Executive Director for OCLF, as I prepare to head off into retirement in the coming weeks. And as the year ahead is the 25th for OCLF, the look and feel of this Annual Report reflects the growth, resilience and impact of OCLF over these years, of which I've had the privilege to be a part of.

The organization started like many – with a couple of individuals wanting to make a difference in their community! So OCLF was created to assist those who could not access traditional financing for their pursuits – business, or personal development. OCLF secured a grant that would allow them to lend money to these individuals, at fair market, or better, rates, and then began the journey of supporting them in their endeavors.

As the community grew, new opportunities were identified – specifically to support newcomers and marginalized individuals with financial literacy education, business plan development, and new partnerships created to not only help with the work, but to be collaborators on some of the projects OCLF has today – Foreign Credential Recognition Loans and Supports, as well as a full suite of Financial Literacy education workshops.

Enjoy this annual report which reflects OCLF's history, milestones and memories. A special thanks to our Partners, Funders, Board members and Staff who have been part of this journey – your commitment to the work we do has been important and impactful.

Jane Duchscher, Executive Director, OCLF

— “ —
The look and feel of this Annual Report reflects the growth, resilience and impact of OCLF over these years, of which I've had the privilege to be a part of.

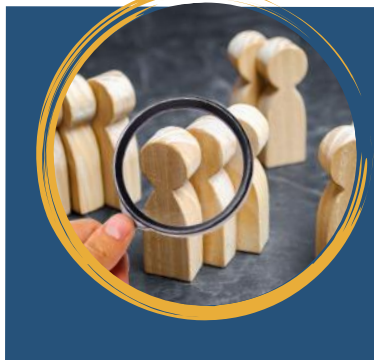
— ” —

2000 IN NUMBERS



2

EMPLOYEES



>100

CLIENTS SERVED



7

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



65+

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



2,700+

CLIENTS SERVED



7

EMPLOYEES

2024 IN NUMBERS

Our Journey Through the Years

Pivoting with Pandemic

Along with major challenges, the pandemic created new opportunities. We pivoted and emerged stronger with new pilots, programs and partnerships

2020

Credential Recognition Program Launched

Funded by ESDC**, Foreign Credential Recognition Program would help internationally trained professionals

Beginning of Entrepreneurship Training

BizTOC marked the beginning of entrepreneurship training at OCLF by helping individuals who wished to explore the idea of starting a business

2019

2017

Educational Workshops

With funding from IRCC*, OCLF expanded to educational services by delivering financial literacy workshops to newcomers

2013

Professional Development Loans

OCLF started offering Professional Development Loans to applicants who were not considered by mainstream lenders

2008

Founding Year

OCLF started providing micro-loans to new entrepreneurs who were left out of traditional financing

2000

RESPECT

CLIENT-CENTRIC

EMPOWERMENT

*IRCC: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
**ESDC: Employment and Social Development of Canada

SPOTLIGHT: Credential Recognition Program

The Credential Recognition Program (CRP) is designed to help internationally trained professionals. It is funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and delivered by OCLF in partnership with Lebanese and Arab Social Services Agency (LASSA), World Skills (WS) and Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO). For more detailed information [CLICK HERE](#).

Since its launch in 2018, the Credential Recognition Program has:

PROVIDED

\$1.9 million

in financing, for internationally trained professionals, allowing them to invest in their future



FINANCED

138

internationally trained professionals in their credential recognition journey in Canada

HELPED

70%

of loan clients who continued credential recognition to find work in their field



IMPACT 2024

Throughout the year OCLF was busy:

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO

2,740

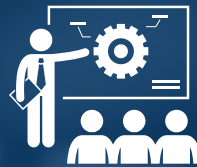
LIVES



DELIVERING

125

FINANCIAL LITERACY WORKSHOPS



HELPING INDIVIDUALS ACCESS

\$719 K +

IN FUNDS



AND RECORDING

76%

NET PROMOTER SCORE (NPS)*



*Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a simple, yet effective metric that measures customer satisfaction and loyalty. [CLICK HERE](#) to know more.

What our Clients Say

“ I loved the interactions with our teacher, my classmates, meeting the guest speakers and listening to their brilliant journeys and learning from their experiences.”



Women Home Based Business Student

“ Thank you for your help and advice. You were very responsive and incredibly supportive throughout this process.”



Credential Recognition Program Client

“ Présentation très claire, fluide et échanges très appréciés. Merci beaucoup.”



Participant à l'atelier, Crédit au Canada





“I liked the clear presentation style and the valuable content. I am very happy to have been in this workshop today. Thank you.”



Avoiding Financial Fraud Workshop Attendee

“Do not open unfamiliar emails or reply to phone texts from unknown people. I really appreciate this advice because I was doing that very often.”



Avoiding Financial Fraud Workshop Attendee

“What I liked the most is Emma and Ann, they provided us with so much information and wisdom regarding on how to operate in a home based business.”



Women Home Based Business Student

“After this workshop I understood why we should pay taxes and what are the benefits of taxes.”



Taxes and Government Benefits Workshop Attendee

“C'est interactif. Les intervenants étaient très knowledgeable et ont répondu à toutes nos questions. Ils maîtrisent vraiment le sujet et l'ont simplifié de façon à ce que tout le monde puisse comprendre. Une belle séance de partage. Merci à vous deux.”



Participant à l'atelier, Crédit au Canada

“You saved my life! I didn't know my past experience could count.”



Credential Recognition Program Client

SUCCESS STORIES

From Risk to Reward: The Power of Community Lending

Emily's story is one of resilience, vision, and unwavering commitment, and of what can happen when an entrepreneur is given the right opportunity at the right time. In 2007, a determined young Emily Bertrand approached the OCLF with the dream of Royale Equestrian Centre, a welcoming space where riders of all ages could build confidence through working with horses.

She had the skills, the plan, and the passion—but traditional lenders saw too much risk. OCLF believed in her, and its microloan became the first step in a remarkable journey.

Emily embraced it all: early mornings, coaching, managing facilities, and wearing every hat along the way. Her entrepreneurial grit became the foundation of her success.



Today, Emily oversees the care for more than 80 horses and welcomes hundreds of riders annually, from beginners and competitors to therapeutic participants across two great locations. Both locations are recognized pillars of Ottawa's equestrian landscape: welcoming, accessible, family-oriented, and grounded in tradition.

When the historic Greenbelt Riding School closed amidst pandemic, Emily, with her partners, saw opportunity in adversity. In 2023, they officially opened Royale Ranch on Albion Road – a Western-style facility offering lessons, camps, boarding, and a welcoming clubhouse. What started as a renovation quickly became a revival: a bold investment in heritage, access, and growth.

Emily notes that OCLF's microloan gave her the momentum she needed to get started. "With that money, I built my first sand riding ring—an essential tool when you want to run a riding program."



Angeline Bilonda's story speaks volumes about her resilience, hard work, and determination. With a medical degree in radiology from the University of Johannesburg, she came to Canada, leaving her family behind.

She worked very hard to reunite with her family in Canada. With help from OCLF's professional development loan through our Alterna program, she became a medical imaging technician. In 2020, she reconnected with the OCLF, seeking financial support to obtain a certificate in Breast Imaging. This time, she was eligible to receive support and services through our Foreign Credential Recognition Program, including a low-interest professional development microloan.

Shortly after being approved for the loan, her husband unexpectedly passed away. She returned to Africa to bring her two children, aged 8 and 12, home to Canada. Even while grieving her husband and taking care of her children, she persevered and continued working towards her dream. OCLF honored Angeline with the ED Recognition Award 2020 for her never-say-quit spirit.



With his positivity and perseverance, Rolando started looking for ways to get his foreign credentials recognized and resume his career here in Canada. The process was very challenging and expensive. During this time that his wife heard about OCLF in one of her 'English as a Second Language' classes. She encouraged Rolando to reach out to OCLF.

When Rolando Finol immigrated from Venezuela to Canada two years ago with his wife and two children, it did not take long for him to realize that he needed to update his professional certifications to the Canadian standard.

In Rolando's words, "OCLF has been a game changer for me... As a newcomer you are concerned to start working as soon as possible, at the end of the day you need to put together all the pieces of the puzzle, being ready to work is paramount for this process." Rolando Finol currently works as a financial advisor in one of the leading financial services companies.

Events over the years



Team Celebrations



Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW) Events





Summary of Audited Financial Statements 2024

REVENUE	DECEMBER 31, 2024
Government Grants	\$1,399,370
Contributed Services	\$201,762
Fiduciary Partner Revenue	\$136,619
Interest and Other Income	\$25,198
Total Revenue	\$1,762,949
EXPENSES	DECEMBER 31, 2024
Staffing	\$650,822
Project Partners	\$969,703
Communications and Marketing	\$19,056
Professional Fees	\$15,337
Operations	\$87,019
Loan Losses	(\$3,750)
Total Expenses	\$1,738,187
NET	\$24,762

Funders

Funded in part by the Government of
Canada under the Foreign Credential
Recognition Program

Canada 

Funded by:

Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



Lending Partners



Community Partners

• Algonquin College • Catholic Centre for Immigrants (CCI) • Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario (CEPEO) • Conseil Economique et Social d'Ottawa-Carleton (CESOC) • Financial Literacy Action Network of Ottawa (FLANO) • Immigrant Women Services Ottawa (IWSO) • KEYS, Kingston • La Cité • Lebanese and Arab Social Services Agency (LASSA) • Mauril-Bélanger Social Innovation Workshop • Ontario Professional Hairstylist Association (OPHA) • Ottawa Chinese Community Service Center (OCCSC) • Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) • Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) • Ottawa Community Immigration Services Organization (OCISO) • Ottawa Employment Hub • University of Ottawa • World Skills • YMCA-YWCA; and many others...



*Thank You for Being a
Part of Our Journey!*



More
ABOUT US



Meet
THE TEAM

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