

The 10 Faces of OJEN

Cristiane Arnold



For Cristiane Arnold, taking part in OJEN's justice education program through the Halton Multicultural Council's Enhanced Language Training provided not only valuable information about Canada's justice system, but inspiration to consider a career in a field she had previously given up on.

OJEN's programs for newcomers introduce participants to Canada's justice system. They learn about the role of the justice system in Canadian democracy and are exposed to principles such as fairness and rule of law. They also have opportunities for positive interactions with volunteers from the justice community, many of whom are immigrants themselves or represent diverse backgrounds.

Meeting the lawyers who volunteered in her program was a revelation for Cristiane. Hearing them talk about the high standard of ethical expectations within Canada's justice system gave her new appreciation for the practice of law.

Before moving to Canada just over three years ago with her husband and two daughters, Cristiane was a lawyer and human rights activist in Brazil, defending landless peasants in their struggle for agrarian reform. In a system where corruption was commonplace and the rule of law did not exist, she had become discouraged by the failure of court system. When she left Brazil to find a better life for her family she had no intention of practicing law again.

Through the OJEN program, Cristiane and her classmates participated in a mock bail hearing. Preparing for and staging a hearing gives English language learners an opportunity to develop presentation skills, gain confidence speaking in front of others and practice pronunciation. It also serves as a demonstration of how our court system works and can be an important step to building confidence in Canada's justice system.

Approximately 1000 newcomers to Canada have participated in an OJEN program similar to the one Cristiane completed. Cristiane would like them made more widely available. She believes OJEN's programs are successful because they help foster awareness and contribute to an inclusive justice

