The pathways of immigrants and refugees to settling, working and belonging in Waterloo Region range in direction, length and complexity. Each newcomer’s experience is unique and is touched by local champions who support their journey and success in their new community.

Waterloo Region is rich in local champions supporting immigrants and refugees. The number of individuals, faith and cultural groups, agencies and businesses joining their ranks grows each day. And as the new #IamWaterlooRegion campaign shows, many immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region themselves become active, inspiring champions for more recent immigrants and for Waterloo Region as a whole.

This latest issue of our Newsletter pays tribute to some of the impressive local champions who are helping immigrants and refugees succeed in Waterloo Region and making this community and the lives of people in it better along the way. You will find information about the people involved with the Immigration Partnership as well as work being done by our partners.

We are so very excited to be part of a community that does so much to champion its newcomers and we invite each of our readers to consider ways of being a local champion for immigrants and refugees.

We hope you enjoy this issue of our Newsletter and are inspired to get involved in improving the lives of immigrants, refugees and other people in Waterloo Region.

Tara Bedard
Manager, Immigration Partnership
I AM WATERLOO REGION

#IamWaterlooRegion is a celebration of the rich diversity of Waterloo Region. This public education and awareness campaign showcases people who have moved here from other countries around the world. The faces of #IamWaterlooRegion are people who are engaged in this community, inspire others and want to share their story.

Each month from June 2016 to May 2017 we will celebrate and share the stories of amazing newcomers who have chosen Waterloo Region to be their home and are making positive contributions to this region. Watch for their profiles, share their stories and promote the many ways that Waterloo Region is diverse. Follow #IamWaterlooRegion on Twitter and go to www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca to read full profiles. Contact Pauline Peng (ppeng@regionofwaterloo.ca) to request posters to display.

Meet the first three #IamWaterlooRegion ambassadors:

ADNAN NAFISA

Adnan Nafisa is originally from Syria and came to Canada in October 2015 to reunite with his brother. His parents remain in Saudi Arabia.

Adnan is going into grade 12 and is attending English as a Second Language (ESL) programming at Waterloo Collegiate Institute (WCI). At school, Adnan is an active member of the student council and Crossing Borders, a touring presentation team that showcases newcomer stories. One of Adnan’s teachers, Lynn Schulze, calls Adnan an inspiration who often speaks of being grateful and has a strong desire to give back.

My name is Adnan Nafisa. I Am Waterloo Region.

“Because of all the people who helped me, I am now able to help others.”

- Adnan
PAMELA ROJAS

Pamela Rojas is a community visual artist and muralist living in Waterloo Region. She was born in Santiago, Chile and began her art studies in Spain. In 1996 she began working with famed muralist Ximena Ahumada de Avila.

She immigrated to Canada in April 2005. After arriving in Waterloo Region, Pamela worked as a Spanish-speaking interpreter for refugees with Kitchener’s Reception House for several years: “Reception House showed me the connection between art and social. I got direction and focus and inspiration.”

Pamela designs beautiful pieces infused with vibrant colours, emotions and a sense of play. She uses art as a tool for integration, and collaborates on community art projects where she can include many people in the co-creation of art. She’s worked on several murals locally including outdoor murals at YMCA’s Mary’s Place, KW Multicultural Centre, Welcome Home and Reception House.

I am Pamela Rojas. I Am Waterloo Region.

ROBERTO VILLAMAR

When Roberto Villamar was planning his family’s immigration to Canada, he didn’t want to live in a huge city. He preferred a smaller, dynamic, innovative community, and he chose Waterloo Region.

Arriving in July 2012 from his home in Ecuador, he says he really appreciates living in a community where you can easily get to know people and see them in the community and that they remember you.

Roberto’s passions are cities and urban design, and he works in an industry that supports moving people. After moving to Kitchener, he started volunteering with Compass Kitchener for a citizen’s perspective and joined the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce for a business perspective.

Multilingual – speaking English, Spanish and German – Roberto wants to encourage more professional immigrants to invest in and make Waterloo Region home, get involved and contribute to the fabric of the community. Proud of his Ecuadorian roots and his new home, Roberto reflects that Waterloo Region and Canada are part of the global economy and that immigration is important to continued growth.

I am Roberto Villamar. I Am Waterloo Region.
SERVICES THAT SUPPORT NEWCOMERS IN WATERLOO REGION

KW COUNSELLING SERVICES

KW Counselling Services is a multi-service organization that has been offering counselling supports to individuals, couples and families in Waterloo Region since 1950.

KW Counselling offers a variety of parenting education workshops, leadership training for members of the multicultural community and outreach support for low-income families, newcomers to Canada and the LGBTQ+ community. A number of programs specifically reach out to newcomers and meet the needs of ethno-cultural communities.

Development Support for Ethno-cultural Groups and Leaders:
KW Counselling sees the value of supporting ethno-cultural leaders and groups to improve the sustainability of the multicultural community in Waterloo Region.

- **Bridging Resources** provides a forum for new and experienced ethno-cultural leaders to meet once a month to share resources, ideas and receive leadership training. Bridging Resources Leadership Development Training is a free, 12-week, interactive training for ethno-cultural community leaders. The next session will be in Autumn 2016.

- **Together is Better** supports new and fledgling multicultural groups to help them grow and become more established and self-sustaining. KW Counselling offers office space, administrative and infrastructure supports, consultations and organizational development to various groups.

For more information contact Georgina de Barros at gdebarros@kwcounselling.com or 519-884-0000 x212.

Counselling: KW Counselling offers ongoing counselling as well as single-session walk-in counselling. The Walk-In Counselling Clinic is open each Thursday from 12:00-6:00 pm and anyone can walk in and see a therapist during those hours without making an appointment.

Counsellors speak 12 different languages and, when necessary, will arrange for interpreters to make counselling available in any client’s preferred language. Thanks to a grant from the Immigration Partnership Fund for Syrian Newcomers, KW Counselling has hired an Arabic-speaking therapist specifically to help Arabic-speaking newcomers.

Counselling fees are determined on a sliding scale based on income and no one is turned away because they cannot pay. If you need counselling, call the intake team at 519-884-0000 x222.

Workshops and Groups for Individuals:
KW Counselling offers several workshops and groups that are specifically for newcomers.

- **Parenting in Two Cultures** workshops focus on topics such as maintaining your own culture while parenting children in Canada, positive discipline strategies and parenting styles that might differ from culture to culture. We currently offer this workshop in English and Mandarin but other languages may be available.

- **Spanish-speaking Trauma Treatment Group** is offered to Spanish-speaking newcomers and is facilitated by a Spanish-speaking therapist. Discussion is focused on issues related to immigration, integration into Canadian society and promotion of mental health.

To learn more about the programs and services of KW Counselling, call 519-884-0000 or visit: www.kwcounselling.com.
CARIZON FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Carizon is a multi-service organization that specializes in children’s mental health, youth engagement and development, family violence services, individual and family counselling, parental support and education, credit counseling, workplace resilience, settlement support and community wellness. Addressing the needs of immigrants and refugees is especially important for Carizon.

The Promise of Partnership Project is a joint project between Carizon Family and Community Services and Reception House and supports government-assisted and privately-sponsored refugees in Kitchener-Waterloo. It focuses on mental health supports for refugees and involves group counselling, as well as support and advocacy for clients within a circle of care that includes settlement workers and community partners. The project also raises community awareness about the needs of newcomers and builds capacity within the social service and mental health sectors to respond to their needs.

Standing Strong is a group that empowers female newcomer youth. Topics engage girls to think about their experiences with body image, relationships, stress and anxiety and learn from their peers through conversations, crafts, games and physical activities.

Youth in Two Cultures is a program for male youth – with a group for ages 12 to 16, and a group for older youth between 17 and 24. The program includes discussions about anger, relationships, anxiety, conflict management, community and family dynamics, and also includes playing soccer to promote positive healthy activity.

Women’s Group is a group program for newcomer women, in partnership with CMHA Waterloo Wellington. This program addresses the unique needs of newcomer women including how to manage the settlement experience for themselves and/or their families, promoting how to maintain mental wellness and a sense of belonging in the community.

Children’s Group supports newcomer children to have fun while developing and expanding their social skills to help them succeed in integrating into their new community. This program runs at the same time as the Women’s Group to address the need for child care.

To learn more about these programs call Elizabeth Akinyemi at 519-741-1122 x319 or visit: www.carizon.ca.
SYRIAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENTS

Waterloo Region has welcomed over 1,275 refugees from Syria since late 2015. That is equal to the number of refugees normally resettled in more than two years – but this time over just a few months.

This monumental resettlement continues to be supported through an amazing collaborative effort by many organizations and individual champions across the region. The work of settlement agencies and traditional partners has been phenomenal, and this community-wide effort has also inspired many new champions to become passionately involved – from funders, governments and community agencies, to employers, faith groups, ethno-cultural communities and many individuals. The Regional Syrian Refugee Resettlement Plan continues and the Steering Committee and Working Groups continue to meet as needed.

The Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership has been a champion for how a community can come together to provide strong settlement support for newcomers.

In May, members of the Refugee Resettlement Steering Committee, Immigration Partnership, settlement and municipal partners testified about the experiences, successes and ongoing challenges in Waterloo Region to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Immigration and Citizenship as part of its study of Canada’s Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative.

In June, the Premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne, Deputy Premier Deb Matthews and MPPs Kathryn McGarry and Daiene Vernile gathered at the Kitchener Public Library. They met with several Syrian families resettled to Waterloo Region and members of the Refugee Resettlement Steering Committee, settlement partners and Immigration Partnership to discuss the resettlement experiences of the families and their ongoing support needs.

See www.WRwelcomesrefugees.ca for more information.
REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN WATERLOO REGION – BY THE NUMBERS

As of July 17, 2016, 29,207 Syrian refugees had arrived in Canada since late 2015. They are made up of a combination of privately-sponsored and government-assisted refugees.

About 1,275 of those Syrian refugees have settled throughout Waterloo Region (as of June 29, 2016), with most of them concentrated in Kitchener. Refugees from other countries are also arriving in Waterloo Region.

Many of the government-assisted Syrian refugees matched to Waterloo Region are large families of seven or more. English language training, housing, and dental care have been key needs so far.

It is anticipated that the increased numbers of refugees being settled in Waterloo Region will continue, with Syrians making up the majority of the arrivals. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has indicated that Waterloo Region should anticipate receiving around 560 government-assisted refugee arrivals (both from Syria and other countries) in both 2016 and 2017, and around 185 privately-sponsored refugees are in the inventory for 2016 for Waterloo Region. Given that the flow of arrivals since April has been slow, another spike in arrivals is expected in the last quarter of 2016 to meet this year’s targets.

COMMUNITY DONATIONS SUPPORTING REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN WATERLOO REGION

Eighteen grants totalling $408,670 have been made to community agencies and private sponsorship groups to support the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Waterloo Region. Some of the funds have supported privately-sponsored Syrian refugees with large unforeseen dental costs. A wide range of community programs for Syrian refugees have also been supported, focussing on systems navigation, interpretation and language supports, transitional housing, social connectedness, counselling, in-school mentoring and much more.

Generous community donations of up to $400,000 are being matched through The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation. The Cambridge and North Dumfries Community Foundation has also been collecting donations.

Applications for support are accepted on a rolling basis and reviewed monthly. The next review deadline is September 7, 2016. See: http://www.wrwelcomesrefugees.ca/en/Grants-Syrian-newcomer-fund.asp

Thank you, Waterloo Region!

As chair of the Donations and Volunteer Working Group for Syrian Resettlement it has been a pleasure to witness the amazing generosity of the people of Waterloo Region as they support Syrian families with donations and volunteer efforts. You are all champions!

I look forward to supporting and witnessing the welcoming efforts of our community as refugees continue to arrive from a variety of regions around the world. Thank you all who have and continue to give.

- Jane Hennig
Chair, Donations and Volunteer Working Group and Executive Director, Volunteer Action Centre

DID YOU KNOW?

Waterloo Region is one of 9 Ontario reception centres for resettlement of government-assisted refugees? Waterloo Region has settled 4.4% of all of the Syrian refugees coming to Canada, even though our community only makes up 1.5% of the total Canadian population.
PARI KAREM, SETTLE STEERING GROUP CHAIR

Pari Karem came to Canada from Iraq in 1999 as a skilled worker. In part because she knows what it is like to settle in a new country, she has been a committed champion for the needs of people settling in Waterloo Region ever since.

Pari is guided by a desire to make the Waterloo Region community a welcoming and inclusive place for newcomers. For Pari, inclusion is exemplified by a quote from University of Toronto professor Dr. George Dei: “Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.”

Pari joined the settlement sector in 2002, working with refugees at Reception House in Kitchener and held positions as a Settlement Worker, Accountant, Administrative Assistant and an Orientation Coordinator for the Resettlement Assistance Program. In 2005 she joined YMCA Immigrant Services as a School Host Coordinator. After working as the Supervisor for the School Settlement team and Director of Operations, she now holds the role of General Manager at YMCA Immigrant Services.

Pari finds many ways to be a community champion – she is currently a member of two regional community councils: the Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council and the Immigration Partnership Council, where she chairs the Settle Steering Group and is a member of its Refugee Services Action Group.

“I believe we have a responsibility to welcome newcomers to Canada,” Pari says, “both because they are an amazing asset to our community and also because we have a moral obligation to help others and give back.”

IAN MCLEAN, WORK STEERING GROUP CHAIR

Ian McLean, CEO, Greater KW Chamber of Commerce (GKWCC) has been Chair of Immigration Partnership’s Work Steering Group since its inception five years ago and actively participates on the Immigration Partnership Council. He is a strong champion of the work of the Immigration Partnership.

Ian is perfect for the role of Chair of the Work Steering Group because the GKWCC is the voice for business in the region. He has knowledge and connections that help the Immigration Partnership reach out to employers and build awareness around the value of recruiting, hiring and retaining immigrants. He also understands how critical it is to develop efficient ways for employers of all sizes to access immigrant talent in Waterloo Region.

Ian has spent most of his life in Waterloo. He and his family have a strong dedication to serving this community and the country. His father Walter McLean was the MP for Waterloo (1979-88) and served as Minister of State (Immigration) from 1985-86. Ian’s parents also spent time in Nigeria as missionaries from 1962-1970. Ian was elected and served on the City of Waterloo Council from 2003-2010 and has worked at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and in large and small businesses.

Ian recognizes that immigration is essential for Waterloo Region to thrive. As immigrants continue to settle in our community they need to feel a sense of belonging and part of that will come through finding meaningful employment.

“Within 5 years all net new labour market growth in Ontario will be filled by immigrants. This makes it essential that we welcome new members to our community and ensure they are settled, have a sense of belonging and find meaningful work.”

- Ian McLean
COMMUNITY FORUM 2016: PLANNING FUTURE DIRECTIONS

On June 17, 2016, Immigration Partnership’s community partners, community leaders and community members braved Uptown Waterloo’s construction to descend on the CIJI campus for the 2016 Community Forum. As the forum for region-wide discussion about immigration, participants spent the morning focussing on immigration, engagement, collaboration and change.

Adnan Nafisa, a Syrian high school student recently resettled in Waterloo Region, inspired participants during an address as the inaugural ambassador of Immigration Partnership’s #IamWaterlooRegion campaign. He shared, “I’m here because someone cared.” He challenged the crowd, saying “Please don’t look at a newcomer and see a ‘refugee’ who needs help, just see another human being to connect with who has so much to share with you. I challenge you to start by spending just five minutes with that person. Who knows what might happen after that?”

A panel of senior sector leaders shared successes, challenges and insights when it comes to supporting newcomers to Waterloo Region, with strong focus on engagement, collaboration and cross-sector connectedness. Participants then broke out into smaller groups to share knowledge, insights and opportunities about refugees/claimants, economic immigrants, temporary foreign workers and international students, which will be considered as Immigration Partnership plans its future directions and establishes a new Community Action Plan.

Everyone has a role to play in making immigration work better in Waterloo Region, and Immigration Partnership provides a platform for collaborative action to achieve this. Get in touch to find out more about our work and the many ways to collaborate.
IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP UPDATES

SETTLE

This year there has been significant overlap in the work of the Settle Steering Group (SSG) and the extensive efforts of many partners involved in Syrian refugee resettlement. An important benefit of the community effort to welcome Syrian refugees is how it has involved many new partners in the settlement of newcomers in Waterloo Region. The SSG is exploring how to incorporate these new partners and new programming within the ongoing work of the Immigration Partnership. The SSG’s Refugee Services Action Group is developing a common checklist of settlement requirements for refugees coming to Waterloo Region and exploring how refugee agencies can coordinate to provide their services most efficiently. The SSG and the many partners continue to champion critical settlement issues such as housing, interpretation and dental health.

WORK

Work Pillar partners in the Work Steering Group (WSG) and the Immigrant Employment Action Group (IEAG) had a busy Spring and are planning for an action packed Autumn as well. Over the Summer committees have met to plan an HR Panel and Networking Event for November 2016 (watch for details coming soon!) and to further develop the Immigrant Talent Engagement Program (ITEP). The WSG continues to enjoy strong partnerships with Conestoga College’s Immigrant Internship Program, the YMCA’s Mentorship Program and the KW Multicultural Centre’s Job Search Workshop Program, and works closely with the many Employment Ontario program partners. Tim Callan, Team Lead at Agilec, one of the Employment Ontario partners, recently became the new IEAG Chair. We welcome Tim who has a real passion for making a difference in this community.

BELONG

After months of planning, in June the Belong Steering Group (BSG) launched its #IamWaterlooRegion campaign, celebrating and sharing the stories and community contributions of newcomers to Waterloo Region. The BSGs Municipal Services Action Group continues to deliver interactive presentations on local democracy and civic engagement to adult English language learners at St. Louis and Conestoga College. BSG also provided coordination and promotional support for events celebrating World Refugee Day 2016 in Waterloo Region throughout the month of June. Visit www.worldrefugeedaywr.com for a list of this and past years’ recognition events. The BSG recently welcomed a new Chair, Iman Arab, after Fauzia Mazhar stepped down. Many thanks to Fauzia for her leadership and welcome to Iman.

PLANNING FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Building on our June 2016 Community Forum, Immigration Partnership is currently undertaking a review of its current Community Action Plan (2014-2016) and preparing for the next phase of our collaborative work. This Autumn Immigration Partnership will be asking community stakeholders to share their thoughts as we determine the strategic actions for our next Community Action Plan. Stay tuned!
COMMUNITY EVENTS AND UPDATES

Newcomer Orientation Week (NOW)
NOW is a three-day orientation to student life, school programs and the Ontario Secondary School System. It offers students a chance to meet their YMCA School Settlement Worker, teachers, principal and other school staff. It is open to students who recently arrived in Canada and will be attending a WRDSB/WCDSB secondary school for the first time in September. For information or to register call 519-742-8220 or email newcomers@ckwymca.ca

When: August 29-31, 9:00 am-3:00 pm
Where: Galt Collegiate Institute (Cambridge)
Eastwood Collegiate Institute (Kitchener)
Forest Heights Collegiate Institute (Kitchener)
St. Mary’s High School (Kitchener)
Waterloo Collegiate Institute (Waterloo)

Cambridge International Festival
The YMCA, City of Cambridge and Idea Exchange in partnership with many community organizations will host a full day of activities encouraging community to explore and participate in and learn from different cultural groups. Many remarkable acts will perform on the main stage, ranging from Portuguese Fado to Metis traditional dancing, and amazing food from around the world will be featured. Stop by the Toyota MMC Discover Diversity Tent to find family-friendly workshops, beading, drumming, yoga, Zumba and more! For more information visit www.cambridgeinternationalfestival.ca #2016CbridgeIntFest

When: Saturday, September 24, 11:00 am-6:00 pm
Where: Riverside Park, Cambridge

Volunteer Recruitment Fair
The Volunteer Recruitment Fair provides an opportunity for newcomers and others to meet representatives from up to 30 different local organizations and learn about how to get involved!

When: Saturday, September 24, 9:30 am-6:00 pm
Where: Conestoga Mall, Waterloo

Ride for Refuge
The Ride for Refuge is a family-friendly bicycling or walking fundraiser in support of many charitable organizations in Waterloo Region that are serving refugees, immigrants and other people seeking “refuge”. For information or to sign up to ride: canada.rideforrefuge.org

When: Saturday, October 1, 2016

Waterloo Public Library Settlement Program

Scholarship Information Session. Learn tips and tricks from our expert guests on ways to make sure your scholarship applications stand out.

When: Friday, September 23, 3:00-5:30 pm
Where: John M. Harper Branch, 500 Fischer-Hallman Road North

Mandarin Family Support Club. Find a supportive community of peers. Program is conducted in Mandarin.

When: Saturday, September 24, October 29 and November 26, 2:00-5:00 pm
Where: McCormick Branch, 500 Parkside Drive

Mandarin Reading Club. The Mandarin Reading Club presents its 1st Anniversary Celebration featuring artistic performances, book displays and lively discussions.

When: Saturday, October 1, 2:00-5:00 pm
Where: McCormick Branch, 500 Parkside Drive

Employment Strategies for Open Work Permit Holders.
Get helpful assistance about finding employment with your Open Work Permit.

When: Wednesday, October 5, 10:30 am-12:00 pm
Where: Main Library, 35 Albert Street

Small Business Info Workshop. This informative session will be useful to entrepreneurs and small business owners.

When: Wednesday, November 16, 6:30-8:00 pm
Where: John M. Harper Branch, 500 Fischer-Hallman Road North
English Conversation Circles. Practice your English skills while we talk, listen, learn and laugh about life in Canada. This free drop-in program is a great way to improve your English speaking skills and meet new people.
When: Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30 pm
Where: McCormick Branch, 500 Parkside Drive

Women’s Health Workshop in Arabic. Learn about your health, your family’s health and health-related resources and services in our community. Child care is available. Registration is required. Call Wasan at 519-745-2531 x132 or email wasan@kwmc-on.com
When: Wednesdays, September 14-November 9, 6:00 pm
Where: Central Library, 85 Queen Street | Bus Route: # 8
October 26 and November 2 workshops will be at another location

Kitchener Public Library Settlement Program

Group of Five Refugee Sponsorship Information Session. This session will review the responsibilities and requirements of sponsors and provide guidance on the application process. Registration is required. Call Kristin at 519-745-2531 x139 or email kristin@kwmc-on.com
When: Thursday, September 29, 6:30 pm
Where: Central Library, 85 Queen Street | Bus Route: # 8

Parents and Grandparents Sponsorship and Super Visa Information Session. Learn more about the application process, including requirements and obligations. Registration is required. Contact Juan Castillo at 226-747-7524 or email juan@kwmc-on.com
When: Saturday, October 15, 10:30 am
Where: Central Library, 85 Queen Street | Bus Route: # 8

Small Business Information Session. Learn the basics about starting a small business, including materials and resources available that can help you become self-employed. Registration is required. Call Yumna Zaghlol at 519-505-4499 or email yumna@kwmc-on.com
When: Thursday, November 3, 6:30 pm
Where: Central Library, 85 Queen Street | Bus Route: # 8

Citizenship Information Session. Be informed about the fees, proof of English skills, forms, and documents needed to complete your citizenship process. Registration is required. Call Wasan at 519-505-2651 or email wasan@kwmc-on.com
When: Saturday, November 12, 11:30 am
Where: Forest Heights Branch, 251 Fischer-Hallman Road | Bus Routes: # 1 & # 201