



NEWSLETTER
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IN THIS ISSUE

Immigration Fact Sheets Will Strengthen
Community Planning

Improving University/Community
Organization Collaboration

Community Events Encourage Learning
and Understanding of Refugees

Community Forum 2015: Everyone Has a
Role in Making Immigration Work Better

Multicultural Festival Promotes Diversity
and Community Building

Community Programs Foster Greater
Immigrant Employment

Immigration Partnership People: Iman Arab,
Belong Steering Group Vice Chair

Through the Looking Glass:
Evaluating Immigration Partnership

Immigration Partnership Updates

DO YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

If you have suggestions or are interested in
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COMMUNITY MATTERS

Community can mean many things and is influenced by the complex circumstances that collide to make up an individual and shape their views of the world.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines community as “a group of people who live in the same area (such as a city, town, or neighborhood); a group of people who have the same interests, religion, race, etc.”, further referring to common interests, characteristics, history, social, economic, professional or political interests, or interest in living together, linked by a common policy.

At its core, contributing to a strong, thriving, inclusive community is what Immigration Partnership is all about. As a collective of partners working collaboratively, we do this by being present in the community, by representing the interests and issues of immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region to the broader community and by creating spaces for planning and implementing changes needed to make Waterloo Region the best community possible for all of its residents.

This newsletter is all about community. Community programs having an impact on immigrants and immigration experiences, Immigration Partnership in the community, how immigration contributes to community development, and more. You will find information on the people behind Immigration Partnership and the work currently being done by our partners.

As always, huge thanks go to our partners for the content and ideas they contributed. We hope you enjoy our Newsletter; just one of the ways Immigration Partnership is trying to contribute to community building in Waterloo Region.

Tara Bedard
Manager, Immigration Partnership

IMMIGRATION FACT SHEETS WILL STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY PLANNING

Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services, in collaboration with the Immigration Partnership, has updated a series of five Waterloo Region Immigration Fact Sheets. The fact sheets were previously developed in 2006 and updated in 2009.

Each fact sheet is one of a series of fact sheets that provides a profile of immigrants in Waterloo Region. Immigrants are people who were born outside of Canada and have been accepted as permanent residents in Canada. Immigrants make up 22.3 per cent of the population of Waterloo Region. Between 2006 and 2011, 15,465 individuals immigrated to this region.

The Waterloo Region Immigration Fact Sheets address:

1. Immigrant Arrivals;
2. Population and Family Composition;
3. Language, Interpretation and Translation;
4. Employment, Education and Income;
5. Health Status of Immigrants

Understanding the make-up of the community is important for planning programs and services. The fact sheets are designed to provide a profile of immigrants in Waterloo Region and to assist with program planning and service delivery across Waterloo Region. The fact sheets are available on the Immigration Partnership and the Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services website.



IMPROVING UNIVERSITY/COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION COLLABORATION

Immigration and settlement agencies often collaborate with local universities to provide service learning opportunities for students and facilitate research access to the local immigrant population, but needs for service placements and organizational needs for research don't always match requests from the universities.

On May 6, 2015, the Immigration Partnership Council convened a panel discussion entitled, *Engaging Post-Secondary Educational Institutions in the Successful Settlement and Integration of Immigrants in Waterloo Region* at Wilfrid Laurier University's *Integrated and Engaged Learning Conference 2015*, to open discussion of these topics. Panel members from the K-W Multicultural Centre, the YMCAs of Cambridge

and Kitchener-Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University's Balsillie School of International Affairs and Immigration Partnership addressed the challenges in trying to manage the increasing requests for student placements and the need for relevant research in the area of immigration settlement in Waterloo Region, and explored how to establish better understanding of the opportunities for collaboration between post-secondary institutions and community organizations. Great discussion followed with panel participants showing a strong desire for concrete actions to improve cooperation experiences and community benefits to post-secondary institution-community organization partnerships in the area of immigration settlement.



COMMUNITY EVENTS ENCOURAGE LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING OF REFUGEES

To mark the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, in December 2000 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution designating June 20 World Refugee Day.

On that day each year the United Nations, United Nations Refugee Agency, government officials and countless civic groups in more than 100 countries host World Refugee Day events to draw attention to the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, conflict and persecution.

Since 2013, Waterloo Region's World Refugee Day tribute has grown into a series of activities and events planned by interested community partners throughout the month of June. Led by the Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns (CCORIC), local groups have identified a local theme and planned a series of events for the public. In 2015, Immigration Partnership's Belong Steering Group partnered with CCORIC in coordinating local events around the theme "I am a Refugee. What do you see?" This year's theme highlighted the need and desire to see beyond the surface, to connect and to see that people coming to Canada as refugees are also parents, neighbours and colleagues – people with a story and a voice.

From June 1-29 many events were held across Waterloo Region to celebrate the contributions, skills and stories of people who have come to our community as refugees, to recognize their struggle as people forced to flee their home and family and travel often long and perilous journeys before arriving in Waterloo Region as our neighbours, and to mourn for those who lost their lives along the way.

Through art exhibits and installations, spoken word, dramatic presentations, author readings, panels, presentations, first person experience, yard sales, dinners and picnics, World Refugee Day 2015 in Waterloo Region was a month of opportunity to learn, participate, understand, reflect and move to action, but the opportunity to learn and act is available every day. See www.worldrefugeedaywr.com for a full listing of events and partners.



According to the United Nations, "Every minute 8 people leave everything behind to escape war, persecution or terror."



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COMMUNITY FORUM 2015: EVERYONE HAS A ROLE IN MAKING IMMIGRATION WORK BETTER

The Tannery Event Centre was humming with energy as Immigration Partnership's community partners welcomed community leaders and community members to their 2015 Community Forum on March 26.

The premiere venue for region-wide discussion about all things immigration, participants were invited to learn more about the people behind Immigration Partnership and its role in the community, its actions and future directions.

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur, President of the University of Waterloo, inspired a captive audience during a key note address on the place and future of community institutions in the context of immigration trends and globalization, stressing that "universities will only survive in the context of cultural diversity." He stated, "Immigrants don't have to found the start-up; they are the start-up," bringing his address back to the attributes that make Waterloo Region stand proud.

There was a good mix of new and familiar faces in attendance, great networking and incredible political support by Regional Chair Ken Seiling, Waterloo Mayor Dave Jaworsky and 9 municipal councillors in attendance. 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.



#WRawesome has been very receptive to the ideas we have been trying to bring forward -Peter Donahue, @LaurierNews #IPForum2015

Immigration Partnership
@ImmigrationWR



Networking, meeting other #refugee welcomingers #WatReg #IPForum2015

Welcome Home
@WelcomeHKW





"Universities depend on cultural diversity for our success" @UWaterlooPres tells #IPForum2015 #uwcommunity

Kelly McManus
@kellymcmanus



Excited to hear more from guest speaker Feridun Hamdullahpur, University of Waterloo President, at #IPForum2015! #WatReg

Heidi Newton
@heidinewton



Glad to be at Immigration Partnership event at The Tannery. Feridun Hamdullahpur, President of UWaterloo guest speaker #IPForum2015

Tom Galloway
@tomjgalloway



Great speech by @UWaterlooPres @ImmigrationWR #IPForum2015 on the importance of immigration to innovation & entrepreneurship

The DEEP Centre
@DEEPCentre



Was proud to give keynote speech today at @ImmigrationWR's Immigration Partnership community forum. #IPForum2015 <http://ow.ly/KQT0Y>

Dr. Feridun Hamdullahpur
@UWaterlooPres



Proud to be a member of this community, great to join the forum today #IPForum2015

Elif Gunce Eskikoy
@elifgunce



Immigration Partnership Community Forum helping to better our Region for everyone. #IPforum2015

Ken Seiling
@KenSeiling

MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL PROMOTES DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Submitted by Bardish Chagger, K-W Multicultural Centre

Every summer for 48 years the Kitchener-Waterloo community has celebrated ethnic diversity and all its wonders at Victoria Park.

Hosted by the K-W Multicultural Centre, the two-day Multicultural Festival (KWMF) offers a taste of many of the cultures that our community embraces, with over 15 food vendors, a main stage representing over 30 countries and over 100 craft vendors and community agencies in an International Marketplace.

This year World Refugee Day celebrations also took place at the KWMF, furthering outreach in our community. The Festival

provided the community, especially young people, access to arts and culture and provided an opportunity to break down barriers and celebrate what unites and brings people together.

The Festival is a family event that celebrates the beginning of summer and all that Canada has to offer. It is unique in this community and showcases a multitude of culturally diverse performances, promotes the exquisite handiwork of international artisans and encourages festival goers to sample delicacies from around the world.

Through raising public awareness and local participation, this Festival is more than just an event; it is a community builder as it strengthens cultural communities by providing opportunity to celebrate culture, to educate the community and to fundraise. Funds raised by ethnic associations have remained local – from building community centres to supporting the Grand River Cancer Centre, St. Mary's Cardiac Unit, and the list goes on.

This Festival reaches out to the local community and celebrates the cultural diversity in ways no other event in the Region can do.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS FOSTER GREATER IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT

WR Connectors Program Launched: An exciting new program, which has been a huge success in Halifax and other Canadian cities, is now here in Waterloo Region! Simple and highly effective, the Connector Program connects professional immigrant women (Connectees) with Canadian women who are leaders (Connectors) in Waterloo Region. Each Connector provides a Connectee with three more connections to grow their network, enabling them to feel more involved in the community and also hopefully find meaningful work. Visit www.wrconnectors.com for more information.

Another Great Global Skills Conference! April 2015 marked the 7th year of successfully providing a forum where Internationally Trained Individuals are inspired and discover possibilities to find local work in their field. At the close of the conference, Immigration Partnership hosted a networking event where over 30 employers were present to connect with the 200 attendees.

Diversity Intelligence Seminar: On May 28 Immigration Partnership held a Diversity Intelligence Seminar for employers, with sponsorship from the Business Development Bank of

Canada (BDC), at the Waterloo Inn. A room full of employers listened to Ellen Austin, HR Business Partner with BDC's Toronto office, speak about how BDC recruits and hires, their commitment to hiring a diverse team and the pivotal role employment service providers play in making that happen. BDC has won several awards recognizing its commitment to diversity.

Employer Recognition Event: Immigration Partnership's Work Steering Group was pleased to host a recognition event on June 11 to say thank you to the many local employers who demonstrate a commitment to engaging and supporting immigrant talent in Waterloo Region. Held at Waterloo Inn, the event showcased the passion and success of several employers who mentor immigrants and hire immigrants as interns. It was also a platform to launch the new WR Connectors Program for immigrant women. Thank you to Ian McLean, President and CEO of the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce, Marilena Benak, YMCA Mentorship Specialist, and Tina Allishaw, Conestoga College's Manager of Immigrant Pathways for their involvement and support of this event.

IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP PEOPLE: IMAN ARAB, BELONG STEERING GROUP VICE CHAIR

I landed in Canada and came to Waterloo Region almost 10 years ago. Surprisingly, I decided to stay here (this is a first for me) and in few months this will be the longest time that I have stayed in a city or country continuously.

I am a physician with a Masters Degree in Public Health and have worked in different countries in the Middle East in many capacities: From general practitioner and public health specialist to Medical Officer of Health/Health Commissioner, in private local clinics through international organizations such as the World Health Organization, The United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Since arriving in Waterloo Region, I have been involved with different initiatives, projects and programs targeting newcomers. I was member of the Crime Prevention Council and a board member for both Reception House and Muslim Social Services. I have volunteered with the Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support, the Community Coalition on Refugee and Immigrant Concerns and of course with Immigration Partnership since its early days. In my spare time I work in the mental health and the cultural competence training fields.

One of the reasons I joined Immigration Partnership was to be the voice of newcomers; to bring their hopes and their concerns to service providers and decision makers. As a community member, I can raise awareness of many issues that affect the life and integration of immigrants and refugees in the community without hesitation or sugar-coating; so no worries, you will hear more from me soon!

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: EVALUATING IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP

For years now, community leaders representing service organizations, government and business, cultural communities and other community members have come together through Immigration Partnership to develop common strategies and take intentional steps to improve immigration narratives in Waterloo Region – for individuals, business and the wider community.

Nearly five years in, the Immigration Partnership Council decided last fall to embark on an evaluation to answer the question, "What value has Immigration Partnership brought to Waterloo Region?" Some days that seems an impossible question to answer, or at least one to which we may not like the answer. We acknowledged that and then carried on.

So what has our evaluation shown? There are no illusions that Immigration Partnership is perfect, but it is bringing value to this community. Among our partners are over 100 people

representing around 50 organizations and employers in Waterloo Region which serve, employ or connect in other ways with immigrants and refugees. We've learned that our strengths so far have been in building connections (more than two thirds of partners report stronger networks, new connections and enhanced relationships), building greater understanding of each other's work and systems among partners (over 50% of partners report greater exchange of information between partners and increased awareness of programs and services at other organizations), and encouraging change in individual and organization practices locally (79% of partners adapted or improved their service delivery, 64% developed new programming and 54% did staff development or made human resource changes).

We're now reflecting on ways to strengthen engagement and influence across the community, and planning for ways to improve our broader impact in the longer-term. It's a good time to get involved with us and make a real contribution to improving immigration experiences in Waterloo Region.

IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP UPDATES

SETTLE

In the last few months, the Settle Steering Group (SSG) has been all about progress and making connections. In April, the SSG hosted an informative session with ESL and LINC language service providers to learn more about both language programs and recent updates to the curriculum that positively impact students learning English. Moving forward into June, the SSG organized an Immigrant and Refugee Housing Consultation in partnership with the Homelessness and Housing Umbrella Group, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Supportive Housing of Waterloo. Participants took part in round-table discussions on the following topics: Housing Challenges, Systems,

Collaboration and Regional Focus. Following the consultation, a report of the information gathered is being prepared and next steps being identified. The SSG also progressed in addressing health related issues. The Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network (WWLHIN) identified Immigration Partnership as a key informant in planning for their 2016-2019 Strategic Plan and a joint meeting was held with members of the Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership to provide information and share ideas with the WWLHIN community engagement team. Connect with Daniella McIntosh at dmcintosh@regionofwaterloo.ca for more information.

WORK

It has been a busy few months for the Work Steering Group (WSG). A pilot of the Immigrant Talent Engagement Program (ITEP) was in operation, with Scotiabank as the premiere employer sponsor. Using unique technology developed by local company Qwalify as a platform, WSG oversaw the pilot of this interactive engagement and recruitment initiative, which already resulted in two newcomers accessing meaningful work locally. A report of the pilot outcomes is being completed and WSG is looking to move forward with this program on a bigger scale. At the same time, WSG has been planning a unique

event for the fall which will bring together talented immigrants and HR professionals at an HR Express event. Stay tuned for the scoop on this! All of this while planning and hosting a networking event at the Global Skills Conference and a Diversity Intelligence Seminar, and attending several Chamber Business After 5's – always trying to reach out to employers and connect about the work we are doing. Thanks to all the great volunteers who direct and support WSG efforts. For more information, contact Nora Whittington at nwhittington@regionofwaterloo.ca.

BELONG

The Belong Steering Group (BSG) has been immersed in much activity to move the Community Action Plan forward. The Municipal Services Action Group partnered with St Louis School's English As Second Language (ESL) Managers to plan and provide interactive in-class presentations on local democracy, municipal government - roles, services, access – and ways to get involved and share your voice. With in-kind planning support from Bethany Rowland from the Region of Waterloo's communications team, Public Education Campaign Action Group members built a framework for a public campaign under the tagline 'I am Waterloo Region' to create and enhance public awareness about the existing diversity in our community, the importance of a diverse community

and the contributions and stories of people who have come as refugees and immigrants – past and present. To better understand how equity and inclusion strategies and policies are being implemented by local organizations, BSG hosted diversity and inclusion information presentations with speakers from the Waterloo Region District School Board and the Region of Waterloo. For more information, contact Janet Howitt at jhowitt@regionofwaterloo.ca.



Immigration Partnership's collaborative actions are guided by its Community Action Plan 2014-2016.

[Click here to view it.](#)