

Building Community Through Immigration



Immigration Partnership Annual Report
2021-2022





Since June 2021, Canada's Oath of Citizenship Recognizes First Nations, Inuit and Métis rights

"I swear (or affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to her majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, her heirs and successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution, which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen."

Changed in response to Call to Action 94 in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report

New Canadians are now swearing a revised oath of citizenship that recognizes Indigenous rights. In the picture: 25 immigrants from across Canada took the oath to become Canadian citizens at a special virtual citizenship ceremony attended by Immigration Minister Sean Fraser on Dec 10, 2021.



About Immigration Partnership

Waterloo Region has been built on the strengths, talents and contributions of immigrants. The Immigration Partnership is a collaboration of over 110 local residents and representatives of more than 60 immigrant and community service, business, municipal, post-secondary and ethno-cultural organizations. We work together to create the conditions for immigrants to succeed and help build a welcoming, dynamic community. We come together through a leadership Council and three Steering Groups – Settle, Work, Belong – which engage in shared leadership, collaboration, research, engagement, education and advocacy. We are accountable to each other and our community.

Our Guiding Principles

Responsive:

Striving to be flexible in adapting to the changing needs of immigrants and refugees through broad community consultation.

Collaborative:

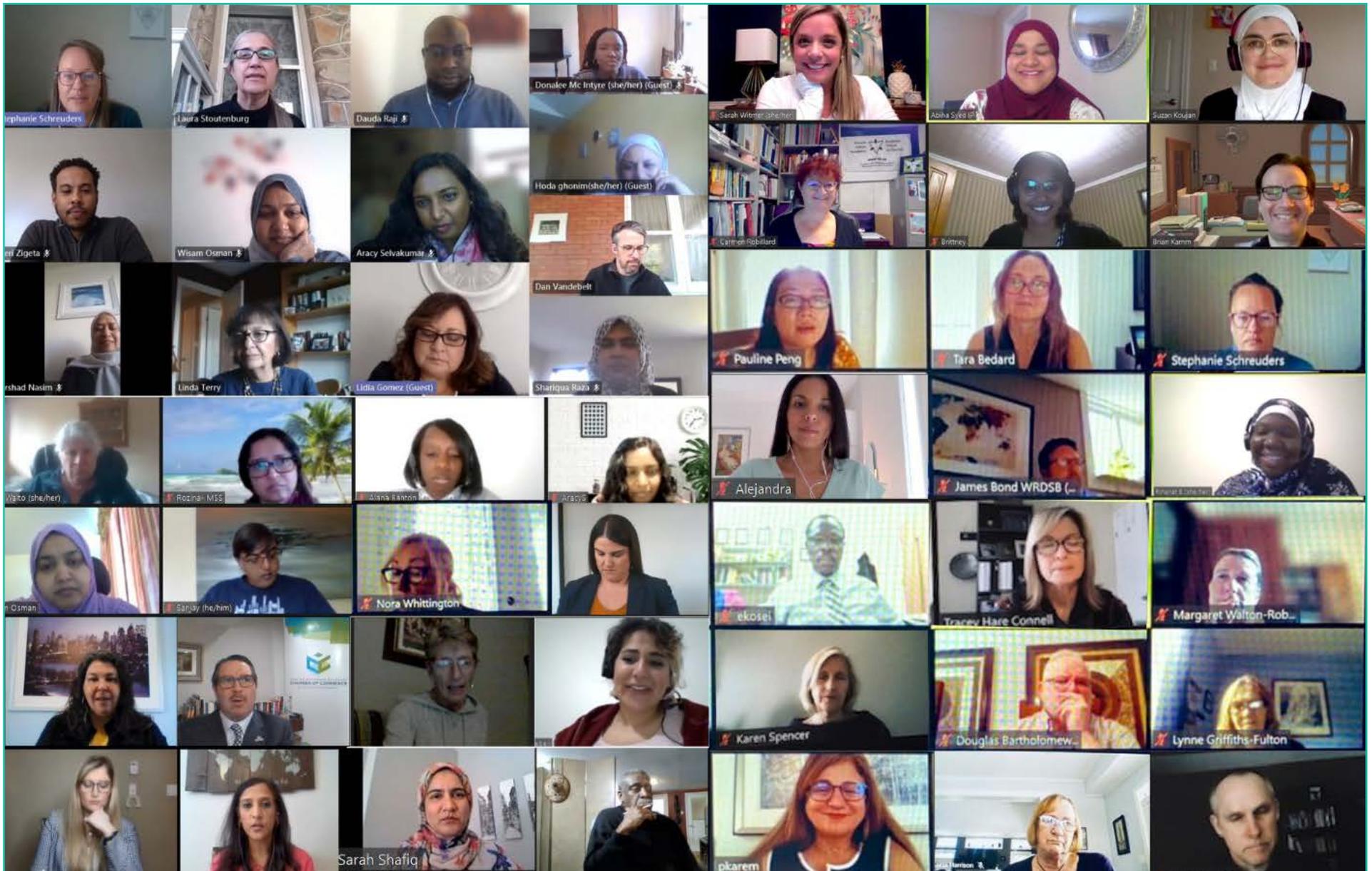
Working collective in an inclusive, respectful, non-judgmental manner which follows consensus and builds on best practices and innovation while being transparent and accountable to the community.

Results-Oriented:

Taking action to efficiently achieve community-wide change to the systems and supports that impact immigrants and refugees.

Our Vision is that immigrants reach their full potential and contribute to creating and sustaining a thriving, prosperous community for everyone.

Connected to work together to build community through immigration



Building community through immigration

This report marks another milestone year for the Immigration Partnership and immigration in Waterloo Region. The second of our five-year strategy for building community through immigration.

It was the second year of living and working through a global pandemic. A year with continued isolation, mental health struggles, social and economic challenges, education interruptions, employer struggles, employee burnout and more. The Taliban take-over of Afghanistan and a war in Ukraine that threw hundreds of thousands of people into forced displacement. The continued rise of hate and racism.

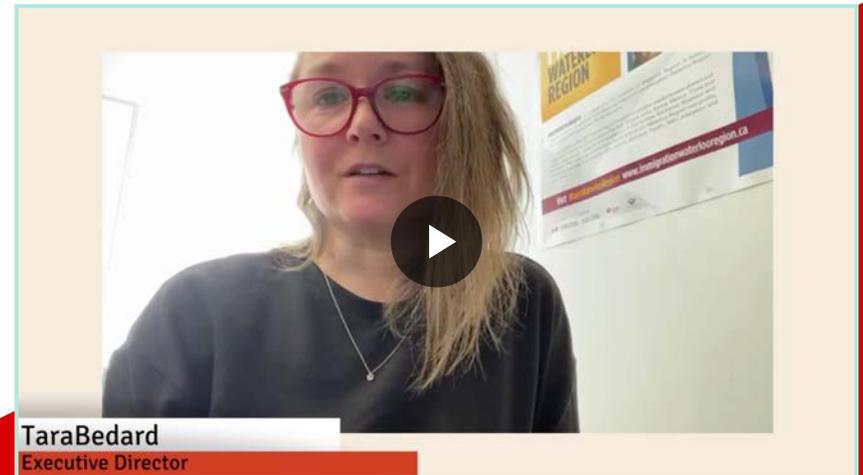
It was a year of record immigration levels in Canada with over 405,000 new permanent residents. The federal government committed to welcoming 40,000 Afghan refugees to Waterloo Region and other communities across Canada. In Waterloo Region we had a huge jump in annual immigrant arrivals, adding just under 8,800 new permanent residents to our population, including almost 300 new residents from Afghanistan. Our temporary resident population continued to soar, and Ukrainian families started to arrive.

It was a year in which our collective resiliency was tested, yet our community and our partners continued to show up, support each other, pick each other up and build each other up. A year in which in the spirit of partnership we called each other to account to do better for everyone in our community.

Immigrants showed up for Waterloo Region in many caring ways. Our amazing partners and the super talented team that provides strategic and operational support to our collective work found creative solutions to the challenges that just kept coming. They continued to support pandemic response and recovery, were chameleons of change to address the issues of the day, continued on the path of anti-racist change and worked together to ensure all immigrants are able to reach their highest potential.

This report is a tribute to the fast growing immigrant community that is helping make Waterloo Region a better place to live every day and to our amazing community partners for all that they continue to do. Thank you for joining us here to meet the incredible people and partners that make up the Immigration Partnership and learn about some of the ways we are collectively building community through immigration.

- Tara Bedard, Executive Director



"(...) roughly 1,800 Afghan newcomers could move to the region over 2022 and 2023, along with refugees from other countries. The prediction was made based on similar numbers from the Syrian refugee resettlement program back in 2015 and 2016."

- Representatives of Immigration Partnership and Reception House
in an interview with CBC News, January 11, 2022



How we built community

Engaged elected officials, systems and policy leaders
in supporting immigrant and refugee success

Partnership-wide

The Immigration Partnership Council champions the Partnership's work in the community, enabling system and strategic planning, advocating and overseeing governance. It fosters shared leadership for collective action in Waterloo Region and beyond, and amplifies the work of the Steering Groups.

Immigration Partnership Council:

Tracey Hare Connell (Chair), The Coaching Co
Dr Ernest Osei (Vice Chair), Community Member
Pari Karem (Past Chair), YMCA of Three Rivers Immigrant Services
Laura Stoutenburg (SSG Chair), Conestoga College LINC Program
Ian McLean (WSG Chair), Greater KW Chamber of Commerce
Brittney Emslie (BSG Chair), KW Multicultural Centre
Brian Kamm, United Way Waterloo Region Communities
Chief Bryan Larkin, Waterloo Region Police Services
Dauda Raji, House of Friendship
Della Lataille-Herdsman (alternate James Bond), Waterloo Region District School Board
Lucia Harrison, KW Multicultural Centre
Prof Margaret Walton Roberts, Wilfrid Laurier University
Murray Gamble, The C3 Group of Companies
Shannon Down, Waterloo Region Community Legal Services
Sonja Erstic, Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration (ex officio)
Conal Vaughan, Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (ex officio)

2021-2022 Alumni:

Douglas Bartholomew-Saunders, Region of Waterloo,
Former Commissioner, Community Services
Karen Spencer, Family and Children's Services
Elaine Ranney, Waterloo Region District School Board
Eliseo Martell and Yasir Dildar, Community members

Strategic and operational staff leadership: Tara Bedard,
Pauline Peng and Alejandra Amezcuita Gutierrez



Immigration roundtable with Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism Parm Gill, MPP Mike Harris Jr, Regional Chair Karen Redman and leaders from the Immigration Partnership, YMCA Immigrant Services, KW Multicultural Centre, Coalition of Muslim Women KW and Reception House Waterloo Region, September 16, 2021

Priority actions:

1. Champion advocacy and engage elected officials, systems and policy leaders
2. Build awareness of the Immigration Partnership and beneficial impact of immigration
3. Lead collaborative learning and community education
4. Break down silos within the Partnership and the community for immigrant and community success



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Reflections from our Past Chair

When I stepped into the role of Vice Chair of the Immigration Partnership (IP) Council and the Chair, I was hesitant about managing the existing workload and being able to fill these roles to the best of my abilities. Having the support from the IP team provided so much ease that I did not feel the two years of each term. The level of support and flexibility provided to me by IP staff and the Executive Director opened my eyes to what true support looks like on a partnership committee.

Being an immigrant myself and working in the settlement sector for the past 20 years, I am grateful for the unique opportunity to have this level of local connection with IP member partners. My story in a simple statement is: through IP, I feel that my work matters and that we make an impact. Thank you for that opportunity and recognition.

- Pari Karem, YMCA of Three Rivers Immigrant Services

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How we built community
Built awareness of the Immigration Partnership
and beneficial impact of immigration

How we built community

Engaged elected officials, systems and policy leaders in supporting immigrant and refugee success

- Advised federal and provincial governments on how to invest to support immigration in the region through participation in budget consultations and discussions with Ministers, MPs and MPPs.
- Encouraged federal election candidates to support immigration and helped informed resident voting by surveying all candidates on immigration topics and sharing the **results** widely.
- Through participating on municipal committees such as the Region of Waterloo's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan Advisory Committee and the Kitchener Mayor's Task Force on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, contributed to the development of equity and anti-racism policies and strategies, comprehensive disaggregated data strategies, roadmap for equitable hiring and retention strategies, frameworks for equity focused funding and more.
- Engaged with Ontario Health West to secure continued annual investment in medical interpretation in Waterloo Wellington for physicians, specialists and community programs.

Built awareness of the Immigration Partnership and beneficial impact of immigration

- Told **stories of immigration**, community building work by partners and the Immigration Partnership in growing collaboration with regional journalists with over 25 pieces broadcast in print, radio and online.
- In partnership with the Conestoga College Bachelor of Public Relations Degree program, mentored students to amplify immigrant voices in profiling their positive contributions in Waterloo Region through the **"Immigrant" podcast series**.
- Engaged extensively with local residents and organizations on social media via Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, bringing awareness important programs and the incredible community contributions of immigrants with over 4,410 followers, 1,755 posts and 805,271 impressions.
- Through the **Immigration Weekly** and **Immigration Waterloo Region website**, increased community knowledge and capacity to support immigrants by providing nearly 580 subscribers and 28,168 visitors with curated content each week on settlement, employment and business supports, immigration research, pandemic developments, public health guidelines and multilingual resources.

How we built community

Strengthened trust, relationships, collaborative learning and community education

Strengthened trust, relationships, collaborative learning and community education

- Developed and implemented a comprehensive **Data and Evaluation Framework** aligned with 2020-2025 strategy for Building Community Through Immigration. Shared the Framework and tools with other Local Immigration Partnerships across Canada to help build research and evaluation capacity.
- Conducted the **2021 Immigrant Survey**, a bi-annual survey of immigrants living in Waterloo Region. Through partner engagement and promotion, 1,500 immigrants shared their experiences of living in the region, 40% more than previously, enabling extensive disaggregation of the data. Detailed **survey results were shared widely** and are informing municipal budget decisions, policy directions, organizational program planning, and more.
- Together with the Children and Youth Planning Table built community capacity for anti-racist organizational change, **hosting Anti-Racism 101 and 102 trainings** for hundreds of community partners and staff.
- Embedded anti-racism in our **governance** and spoke out against the impacts of hate and racism in public and at community planning tables.

- Collaborated with partners like the Children and Youth Planning Table, Workforce Planning Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, Region of Waterloo, Kitchener Public Library and immigrant-serving organizations to build data and research knowledge, evaluation and capacity on immigration and ethnicity in Waterloo Region.

Break down silos within the Partnership and the community to promote immigrant success

- Ongoing engagement in collective Covid-19 responses to bring immigrant perspective by participating in pandemic groups with a focus on language and interpretation issues, vaccine access, children and family supports and more.
- Supported groups working together to enable migrant farm workers in Waterloo Region to apply for permanent residence through the new immigration program – connected community groups to KWMC-provided tablets to assist English language learning and YMCA language assessment opportunities to meet testing requirements.

How we built community
Break down silos within the Partnership and the community to promote immigrant success

What are immigrants telling us: **By the numbers**

This infographic outlines findings from the **2021 Immigrant Survey**, which gathered input from 1507 immigrant respondents living in Waterloo Region, during the third wave of pandemic.

1,507
IMMIGRANT
RESPONDENTS:

1,127 surveys in
English and **380**
in other languages
(Chinese, Spanish,
Serbian, Arabic, Farsi,
Tigrinya, Turkish, French,
Amharic, Somali)

84% had a
first language
other than English
(80+ different first
languages)

71% of those
with a non-English
first language
spoke English
well or very well

49% lived in
Kitchener,
31% in Waterloo,
13% in Cambridge
and **3%** rural

71% had
completed a
Bachelor's degree
or above, compared
to **23%** of the
general population

Immigrants positively contribute to life in Waterloo Region in many ways, including:

63% help their neighbours when they need it
35% provide unpaid help for family members
35% donate to local charities
5% are business owners contributing to the regional economy.

Employment and housing were top of mind:

51% indicated
that their **job was not
at the same level
as their skills** and
experience

26% of immigrants
indicated that their
**current housing was
not suitable and/or
affordable** for them

Immigrants most frequently chose Waterloo Region for:

Family or friends that live in the Region **42%**
Work **30%**
Post-secondary education **25%**
Perceived affordability **19%**

We need to work on
**community
belonging** for all:

71% had a **strong
sense of belonging** in
Waterloo Region

11% were **dissatisfied**
with their life

11% felt Waterloo
Region was **not welcoming**

24% had
experienced
discrimination or being
treated **unfairly** by others

76% felt isolated



How we built community

Developed communication tools and strategies to simplify service systems and pathways for immigrants

Settle

The Settle Steering Group works together to support the community integration of immigrants by addressing transitional hurdles faced by some when arriving in Waterloo Region.

Settle Group Partners:

Laura Stoutenburg (Chair), Conestoga College
Stephanie Schreuders (Vice Chair), Mennonite Central Committee Ontario
Hoda Ghonim (Advisory Chair), SHORE Centre
Alana Banton and Sarah Gilles, Region of Waterloo
Ana Luz Martinez, KW Multicultural Centre
Anna Schwarz and Marian Rozman, YMCA of Three Rivers Immigrant Services
Carolyn Beukeboom and Wajma Attayi, Centre for Family Medicine
Charlene Mak, International Student Advisor Group & Wilfrid Laurier University
Dauda Raji and Nermin Ozdemir, House of Friendship
Debbie Engel, Carizon Family and Community Services
Donalee McIntyre, City of Cambridge
Eda Dede, Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre
Erica Dudzus, Kitchener Public Library
Janet Waito and Pauleen Payne, St Louis Adult Learning Centres
Jean De Dieu Basabose, College Boreal
Jenni Wagler, COMPASS Refugee Centre
Lidia Gomez, English at First
Linda Terry, Age Friendly Network of Waterloo Region
Lynne Griffiths-Fulton and Aracy Selvakumar, Reception House Waterloo Region
Priscilla Muzira, AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener Waterloo and Area
Rachael Lake, Imtenan Abd-El Razik and Angie Pham, Waterloo Region Community Legal Services
Rozina Shaheen, Muslim Social Services



“**This is Home**” video series featuring the journey of newcomers to find a home, as well as landlords who have helped create a caring community that supports immigrants.



I appreciate our Settle Steering Group meetings, as a time to hear updates from other partners across the Region as a reminder that we're not alone in this work, but also as an opportunity to look for places of connection and overlap.

- 2021 Partner Survey respondent



Shariqua Raza and Ashi Nasim, Muslim Women of Cambridge

Wisam Osman, Coalition of Muslim Women KW

Zeri Zigeta, Kinbridge Neighbourhood Association

Community Member: Eliseo Martell

Corresponding Members:

Barb Van Giessen, The Working Centre

Ed Kaut, Region of Waterloo (Income Support and Children's Services)

Jennifer Ardon, Lutheran World Relief

Kristine Marchetti, Crystal Swinton and Jennifer Staples, Region of Waterloo Public Health

Rana Shami, Kids Ability Canada

Shannon Down, Waterloo Region Community Legal Services

Shelley Campagnola, COMPASS Refugee Centre

Sheri Follett, Big Brothers Big Sisters Waterloo Region

Siba Al-Khadour, Levant

Community Member: Lilliana Araujo

Action Group Members:

Aleksandra Petrovic, Michelle Knight and Hollee George, Social Development Centre Waterloo Region

Andrew Ramsaroop, City of Kitchener

Brittney Emslie, KW Multicultural Centre

Crystal Cormier, Sanderson Management Inc.

Emma Jennings, Reception House Waterloo Region

Diane Wiles, Leadership Waterloo Region

Kristen Thompson, Waterloo Region Community Legal Services

Mark Willcock, Indwell

Community Members: Ailton Santana and Farida Allie

2021-2022 Alumni:

Erin Forde, COMPASS Refugee Centre

Gael Gilbert, Supportive Housing of Waterloo

Jarvis Sparks and Kristen Johnson-Perlock, Kitchener Public Library

Joe-Ann McComb, Kinbridge Neighbourhood Association

Kaylee Perez, Mennonite Central Committee Ontario

Sakina Kirefu-Khan, Grand River Hospital

Sarah Farwell, Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network

Sarah Harjee, Centre for Family Medicine

Sophia Stanberry, Sherry White and Sanjay Govindaraj, Region of Waterloo

Strategic and operational staff leadership:

Dan Vandebelt

Priority actions:

1. Develop communication tools and strategies to simplify service systems and pathways for immigrants
2. Brand "settlement" and drive collaboration and innovation within the sector
3. Leverage service providers and planning tables as effective immigrant supports through strong relationships and collaboration
4. Activate networks of private stakeholders in serving immigrants

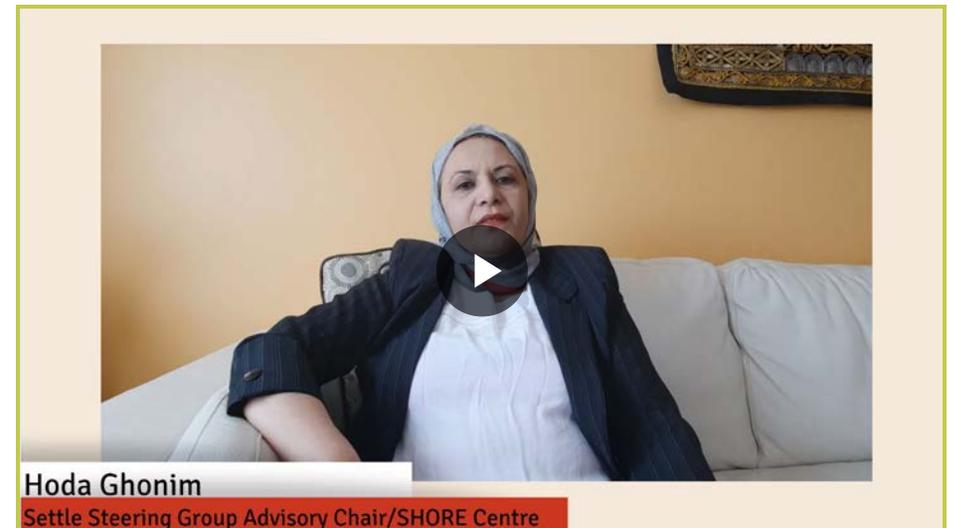
How we built community
Strengthened collaboration and
innovation within the settlement sector

How we built community

Developed communication tools and strategies to simplify service systems and pathways for immigrants

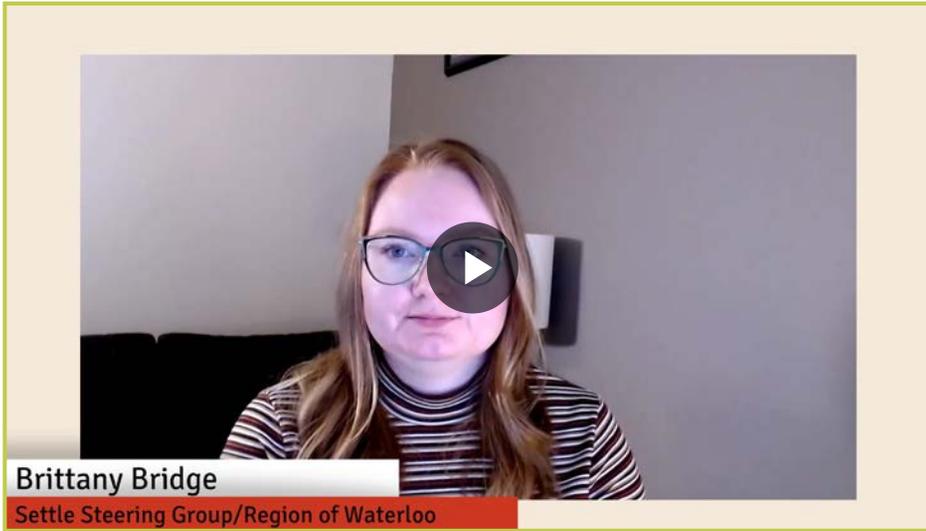
- Collaborated with the KW4 Ontario Health Team to assess critical needs in refugee and newcomer health, focusing on mental health, interpretation and pandemic-related needs.
- With Reception House, provided guidance to Wilfrid Laurier University Political Science students to further local research on interpretation processes in municipalities and local organizations. Surveyed KW4 Ontario Health members about language interpretation use and compiled estimates of annual usage by the largest nine local users to support ongoing exploration of coordinated system approach.
- Developed tools for health care providers about how to use interpretation. Started an environmental scan on interpretation for future conversations about a systems approach. Advocated with Ontario 211 information service to enhance interpretation and translation access to their services (email/chat/web) to benefit immigrants.

- Launched the 2021 list of top languages for interpretation and translation, which informed program planning, COVID vaccine efforts and community outreach by organizations like the Region of Waterloo and Coalition of Muslim Women of KW.
- Updated the English Language Learning Options in Waterloo Region Overview that provides newcomers with a guide on how to access programs in Waterloo Region to improve their English communication skills.



How we built community

Encouraged landlords and organizations to provide housing for immigrants



Strengthened collaboration and innovation within the settlement sector

- Worked with YMCA, K-W Multicultural Centre and Reception House in hosting periodic lunches for direct-service staff to learn and network together.
- Hosted shared learning events among partners to improve their performance in serving immigrants, i.e., a learning session about a London program that focuses on contacting and supporting landlords renting to newcomers; and a session with 43

participants about summer camp programs to inform outreach to newcomer and low-English ability communities in Waterloo region.

- Supported Grand River Hospital and other health partners in piloting voice-enabled mobile tablets for interpretation in health settings (both hospital and broader community contexts).
- Advised provincial and national research projects like Allies in Refugee Integration exploring settlement-private sponsor collaboration in Ontario and Virtual Mental Health Access.
- Participated in Leadership Waterloo Region's 2021 Affordable Housing Café and Class, Cambridge Affordable Housing Roundtable and City of Waterloo's Housing Grant consultations to support the development of ideas on affordable housing solutions from an immigrant perspective.

How we built community

Built capacity of service providers and planning tables to effectively support immigrant through strong relationships and collaboration

Encouraged landlords and organizations to provide housing for immigrants

- Supported Region of Waterloo Housing staff in development of a new equity-based portable rent assistance program that provided support for 30 Black, Indigenous, racialized and marginalized families, expanding to 200 families in 2022.
- Recognized the efforts of Narine Dat Sookram, HIP Developments and Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in helping new immigrants find home with the 2021 Newcomer Landlord Award at the Region of Waterloo National Housing Day virtual celebration in November.
- With COMPASS Refugee Centre and Reception House Waterloo Region produced and launched the “This is Home” video series featuring the journey of newcomers to find a home, as well as landlords who have helped create a caring community that supports immigrants.
- Surveyed area real estate agents about their challenges and hesitations in renting to newcomers. The responses from 36 participants will inform planning related to affordable housing for immigrants.

Built capacity of service providers and planning tables to effectively support immigrant through strong relationships and collaboration

- Contributed to affordable housing solution development through participation in Leadership Waterloo Region’s 2021 Affordable Housing Café and Class, the Cambridge Affordable Housing Roundtable and the City of Waterloo’s Housing Grant consultations.

What did immigrants tell us about accessing services in Waterloo Region?

“

I had a language tutor who was recommended by the centre since last year. We have a half hour conversation circle on weekly basis. I give thanks and credits to the centre and my tutor since my English level has been improved to a higher level.

- 2021 Immigrant Survey respondent

”

“

I had good experiences accessing services online. Most of the people have been very understandable of the situation and have tried to manage to be as accessible as possible given the circumstances.

- 2021 Immigrant Survey respondent

”

Support for Afghan Resettlement and Ukrainians in Waterloo Region

In August and February, the Federal Government announced 40,000 Afghan refugees and an unlimited number of Ukrainians fleeing war were welcome in Canada.

The Immigration Partnership Council launched a **Refugee Task Force** to provide strategic and operational oversight to **resettlement and integration efforts** involving members of the Council, settlement leaders Reception House and YMCA Immigrant Services, as well as leaders from housing, education, health and community integration.

With the Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation and Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation, activated the **Immigration Partnership Fund for Immigrant and Refugee Initiatives** to receive over **\$55,000 in donations to support Afghan resettlement initiatives.**

Engaged media to foster support for Afghan resettlement and Ukrainians arriving in Waterloo Region through **story-telling and information sharing.**

Launched **Afghan Resettlement and Solidarity with Ukraine webpages** with updated information and resources for residents to **support the families arriving in Waterloo Region.**

Equipped elected officials and municipal leaders with **regular updates on community impacts** through **council reports** and other briefings.

“
Thankfully our community has begun to respond. Local resettlement organizations have already been working hard to support Afghan families and address systemic barriers. And, this week, Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership established a task force designed to develop a more co-ordinated community-wide plan.”
- Rich Janzen, Centre for Community Based Research Executive Director in “It takes a community to welcome refugees. Remember?” *The Record*, December 9, 2021
”

2021 Partner Survey findings: Our partners on how we are making an impact and what we need to focus on

This **infographic** reflects partner reflections on the work of the Immigration Partnership and its future priorities, shared in December 2021.

30

RESPONDENTS:

86% felt strongly that **Immigration Partnership** is achieving its mission

Feedback on where the Immigration Partnership should spend more energy in **2022:**



Addressing **hate and racism** and fostering welcoming and inclusion



Building connection between groups - **connect** different **communities, services and sectors** together



Supporting **affordable housing** development



Contributing to **systems change**

Specific ways the Immigration Partnership should help further anti-racism efforts in **2022:**



Facilitate training and capacity building for leaders and employers on anti-racist organizational change



Support public education and the efforts of community organizations working in this space



Support communities of practice and inter-organizational collaboration

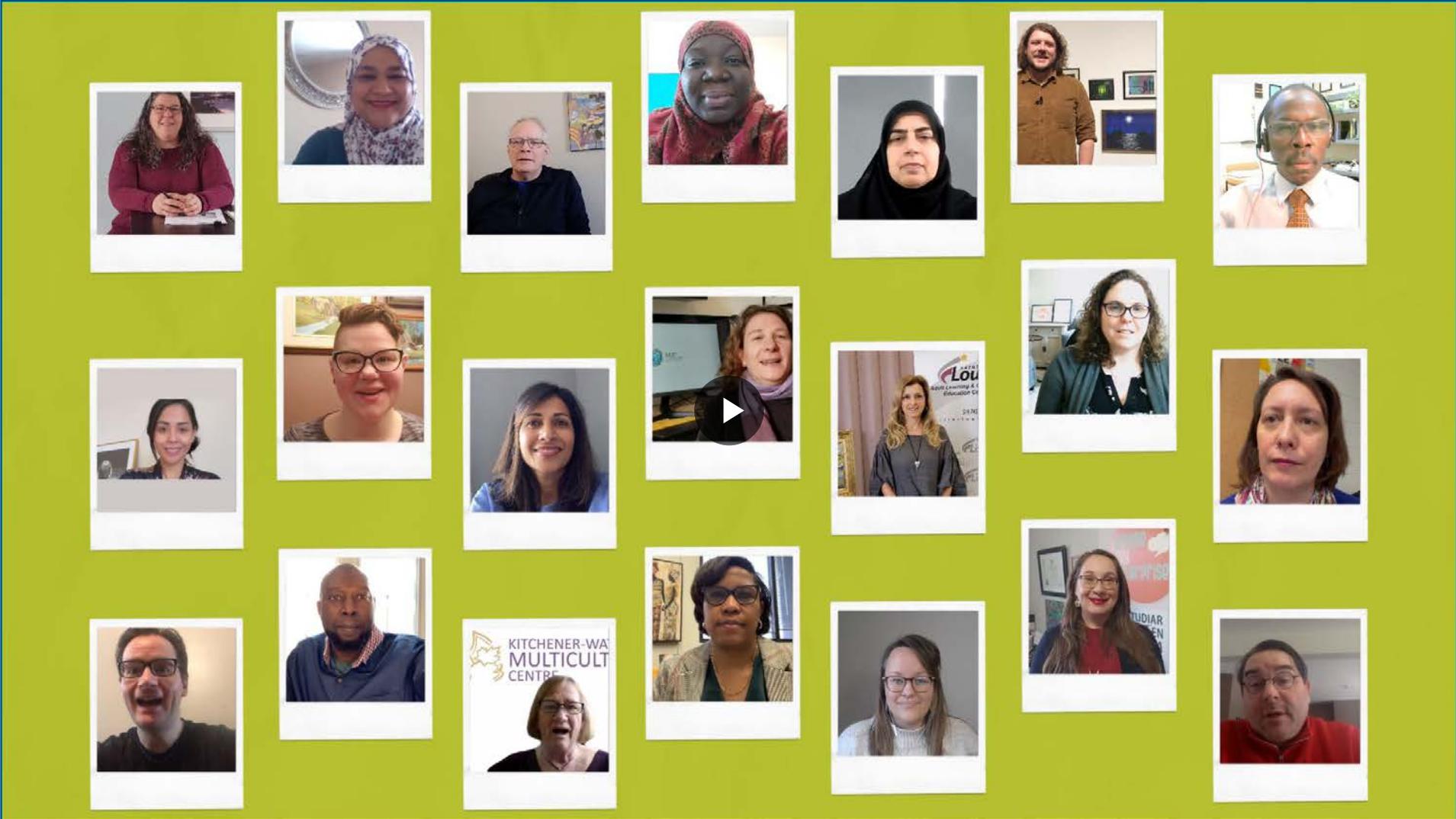


Advocate for and support equitable policy development



Centre the leadership of immigrants in this work

What do we want to accomplish in 2022 for our collective work?





How we built community
Conceptualized employer-focused
solutions to hiring challenges

Work

The Work Steering Group works together to maximize the economic contributions of immigrants by equipping employers with resources to hire and retain immigrant talent and to address the challenges of some immigrants to finding meaningful employment or starting a business.

Work Group Partners:

Ian McLean (Chair), Greater KW Chamber of Commerce

Sheila McIntosh (Vice Chair), Community Member

Charlene Hofbauer, Workforce Planning Board Waterloo Wellington Dufferin

Chris Farrell and Naudia Banton, City of Kitchener

Eltag Elkhailifa, KW Multicultural Centre

Elizabeth Arcila, Orange Sky Enterprises

Isabel Vankuik, Scotiabank

Janet Lehman, ODG (Ontario Drive and Gear)

Julie Newman, Carizon Family and Community Services

Laura Pearce, City of Cambridge

Marsha Schlueter, YMCA of Three Rivers

Kristin Sainsbury, City of Waterloo

Ksenia Zverev, Waterloo Region Small Business Centre

Michelle Hollis, University of Waterloo

Michelle Yutzi, Wilfrid Laurier University

Sherri Tryon, Conestoga College

Sue Benoit, Vidyard

Tim Callan, Agilec

Tina Baksh, Conestoga College

Roberto Villamar, Community Member



Recognizing area employers for exceptional contributions to refugee employment in Waterloo Region through the Reception House's Working Together Employment Project, May 2021.

Immigration Partnership has been successful in the past by focusing on educating systems and advocating for changes in building a welcoming community for everyone including immigrants and refugees. IP should remain focused on indirect services. Continue to advocate for change so immigrants and refugees can access our systems especially with employers and housing.

- 2121 Partner Survey respondent

Action group members:

Omar Hussein, Magnet (Ryerson University)

Strategic and operational staff leadership: Nora Whittington

Priority actions:

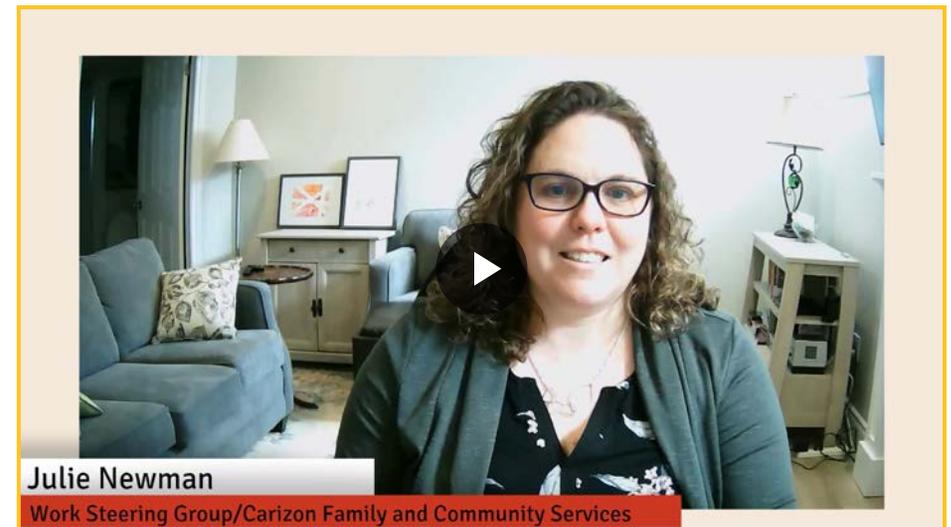
1. Develop campaigns and tools to market the value proposition and economic contribution of immigrants to employers
2. Foster cohesive service to employers and immigrant job-seekers across sectors and talent
3. Engage networks of employers to hire and retain immigrants
4. Collaborate with leaders and organizations (public, private and not-for-profit) leaders to foster immigrant attraction, employment and entrepreneurship

How we built community

Employers became more aware and open to hiring immigrant talent and to importance of anti-racist policies in the workplace

- Publicized the business benefits of hiring immigrant talent through strategic ads in the Chambers of Commerce's magazines, annual publications and directories.

- Through social media and community engagement, promoted the #HireImmigrantsWR campaign and research on immigration as a component to helping rebuild the economy in the region.
- Hosted booths at virtual job fairs organized by Greater KW Chamber of Commerce to make employers aware and open to hiring immigrants.
- Partnered with the Guelph Wellington Immigration Partnership to support Workforce Planning Board on forthcoming new research to support further employer engagement in hiring immigrants.



- Collaborated with the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, Immploy and Southwest Ontario Local Immigration Partnerships to host more than 20 educational events for more than 1000 employers. The events provided employers with tools and information to build a culture of anti-racist organizational change, recruit and retain immigrant talent, harness international talent in the workplace, explore the future of work in the region, measure the impact of COVID 19 on the workforce and more.

Conceptualized employer-focused solutions to hiring challenges

- In partnership with Worldwide Education Services (WES), worked to develop a new co-designed playbook for employers on hiring immigrants. Held a co-design workshop entitled **“Strategies and Tools for Harnessing International Talent in the Workplace”** for 65 local employers, HR leads, executives and entrepreneurs. Used information and feedback to plan and develop the playbook.
- Explored various platforms for a one-stop immigrant talent hub in partnership with organizations like the Workforce Planning Board and World Education Services. Conducted review of logistics, concept and funding possibilities.
- Worked with the Workforce Planning Board to further develop their FindyourJob.ca job platform to enable employers and immigrant job seekers connect and build employment relationships.



Promoted employer and immigrant job seeker connections

- Supported strained employers across manufacturing, healthcare, warehousing, restaurants and retail sectors to connect with immigrant talent through ethno-cultural groups and build a reputation as an employer of choice.
- Contributed to the Region of Waterloo’s Reskilling Initiative with education, business and service sector representatives to access funding to increase the warehousing sector’s ability to hire and retain talent.

How we built community

Employers became more aware and open to hiring immigrant talent and to importance of anti-racist policies in the workplace

- Joined Reception House Waterloo Region to recognize area employers' and Conestoga College's commitment to supporting Reception House's Working Together Employment Project by hiring over 120 of refugee newcomers into stable jobs with a tailored three month on-the-job language course to help them excel in the workplace.
- Partnered with the Workforce Planning Board on three Virtual Job Fairs to facilitate connections between immigrant job seekers and 45 employers looking to fill over 400 positions in healthcare, manufacturing and construction.
- Supported the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre to organize the 14th Global Skills Conference under the theme "Pathways to Success and Making Connections in the Digital Age," providing 200 internationally training professionals with valuable information and resources on the current realities of online job searching and networking.
- Provided immigrant job seekers the opportunity to connect with employers and human resource professionals in the Workforce Planning Board's Manufacturing Day event.

Joined the collective effort during the COVID-19 crisis

- Developed stronger relationships and interactions with the economic development areas of the City of Waterloo, City of Kitchener, City of Cambridge and Region of Waterloo via Best WR and supported efforts to help various sectors and their workforce impacted by the pandemic.

What did immigrants tell us about their experiences looking for a job in the region?

This area [Waterloo Region] is well-known as being progressive and offering many opportunities for employment at all levels from unskilled to post-graduate qualifications.

- 2021 Immigrant Survey respondent

Employment services are limited for professionals who actually have skills and it is difficult for them to enter into the industry, especially when they are new to the country.

- 2021 Immigrant Survey respondent

I just recently learned about employment services. I think the biggest issue I have is finding resources or knowing they exist. For example, I would be very interested in learning about free or affordable mental health services.

- 2021 Immigrant Survey respondent



How we built community

Built connections, capacity and civic engagement among ethno-cultural groups to increase immigrant influence and social connectedness

Belong

The Belong Steering Group works together to unleash the vibrant and diverse community contributions of immigrants by addressing long-term challenges to developing a strong sense of belonging in Waterloo Region.

Belong Group Partners:

Brittney Emslie (Chair), KW Multicultural Centre
Shannon Markle (Vice-Chair), Idea Exchange
Ajirioghene Evi-Cobbinah, Kind Minds Family Wellness
Aleksandra Petrovic, Social Development Centre
Amy Slack, Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank
Anneke van den Berg, Canadian Arab Women's Association
Aracy Selvakumar and Heather Montgomery, Reception House Waterloo Region
Brice Balmer, Interfaith Grand River
Dianne Boston-Nyp, Volunteer Waterloo Region
Fadhilah Balogun, CCORIC member, African Women Alliance of Waterloo Region
Fauzia Baig, CAOs Office, Region of Waterloo
Fauzia Wafai, Islamic Circle of North America-Canada and Muslim Women of Cambridge
Gabrielle Laurin, Conseil Scolaire Viamonde
Pamela Albrecht, City of Waterloo
Kelly Kipfer, Waterloo Public Libraries
Kelly Steiss and Marla Pender, City of Kitchener
Kristen Bustamante and Sophia Stanberry, Region of Waterloo
Marian Rozman, YMCA of Three Rivers – Cambridge
Marie-Pierre Daoust, Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir
Marwa Gebeil and Rihanat El-Alaw, Kinbridge Community Association
Melissa Strachan, Carizon Family and Community Services
Mifrah Abid, Coalition of Muslim Women



A small bike ride event with the **BYCS** Bicycle Mayor of Waterloo at Kitchener's Victoria Park to wrap-up the second phase of the #RacialEquityWR campaign, October 2021. Participants had the opportunity to discuss and advance anti-racism, sustainability and cycling initiatives with representatives from CycleWR, Sustainable Waterloo Region, Climate Action WR and others.

It has been great to see the Belong Steering Group's connection with ethno-cultural groups grow over the past year, and to see relationships form between BSG members and ethno-cultural leaders, but more importantly, relationships and connections grow amongst ethno-cultural leaders themselves, so that they can learn from each other, share successes and challenges, support each other.

- 2021 Partner Survey respondent

Nazy Pazoki Zadeh, House of Friendship
Olga Vigil Letang, City of Cambridge
Paige Monck-Whipp, Wellbeing Waterloo Region
Paulina Rodriguez, Chief Administrator's Office, Region of Waterloo
Renu Bhandari, Focus for Ethnic: Women Waterloo Region Inc.
Rozina Shaheen, Muslim Social Services KW
Sheryl Tilley, Region of Waterloo Library
Stephen Lavigne, KW Art Gallery
Suzan Koujan, Canadian Arab Women's Association
Community Members: Pamela Rojas

2021-2022 Alumni:

Aisha Wovenu and Jessica Their, Carizon Family and Community Services
Chaitali Maybhate, Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank
Helen Loftin and Katy Boose, Reception House Waterloo Region
Jaskirat Gill, Waterloo Region Police Service
Jim Bowman, City of Waterloo
Katie Hill, Sustainable Waterloo Region
Sarah Shafiq, Interfaith Grand River & Coalition of Muslim Women
Vanessa Lopak, City of Cambridge

Strategic and operational staff leadership: Abiha Syed



Priority actions:

1. Build connections, capacity and civic engagement among ethno-cultural groups to increase immigrant influence in policy making and social connectedness
2. Work with municipalities and other public sector partners as leaders and advocates to strengthen immigrant welcoming, inclusion and engagement
3. Increase public support for immigration, and action to address racism, discrimination and foster immigrant belonging through campaigns and initiatives
4. Collaborate with systems and community tables and leaders

How we built community

Collaborate with systems and community
tables and leaders

How we built community

Built connections, capacity and civic engagement among ethno-cultural groups to increase immigrant influence and social connectedness

- Deepened connections with leaders and members of Waterloo Region ethno-cultural communities and faith groups to share resources and strategies to address social isolation and exclusion exacerbated by the pandemic. Hosted a virtual Multicultural Connections Workshop Series where more than 90 ethno-cultural leaders and community members exchanged experiences and built capacity for grant writing and intercultural communication.
- Recruited and supported ethno-cultural groups and community organizations to host virtual information sessions in partnership with the Region of Waterloo on the Safe Voluntary Isolation Site and Covid-19 vaccination and clinics for over 80 participants.



Pamela Albrecht

Belong Steering Group/City of Waterloo

- Hosted the “Introduction to Indigenization: A Holistic Approach” training series to build community capacity for reconciliation through reflection on Canada’s colonial history, residential schools and their impact. Thirty-five members of the Immigration Partnership Council and Steering Groups participated in this four-week certificate training that consisted of three sessions and a virtual residential school tour.

Worked with municipalities and other public sector partners as leaders and advocates to strengthen immigrant welcoming, inclusion and engagement

- Supported the City of Kitchener in engaging newcomers ahead of the 2022 Municipal Election to build an appropriate and inclusive election plan.
- Supported the City of Cambridge in planning its Newcomer Connections Conference to foster inclusion and provide newcomers with information on resources and services.
- Advocated for newcomer and racialized community members in development of the Region of Waterloo’s Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan.
- Connected with Region of Waterloo Library Branches management team on strategies to strengthen sense of belonging and inclusion among ethno-cultural communities living in the rural townships.
- Advocated for the well-being of children in development of a regional children’s mental health strategy led by Lutherwood and the Resilience Project led by Family and Children Services and Muslim Social Services.

Increased public support for immigration, and action to address racism, discrimination and foster immigrant belonging

- Through the #RacialEquityWR campaign was a catalyst for residents to stand up against racism and embrace diversity, belonging and equity for all through distribution of over 750 free #RacialEquityWR lawn signs, posters and window clings, and significant social media engagement by residents, businesses and local organizations sharing pictures and messages of solidarity registering over 267,600 impressions.
- Joined forces with nine community partners to organize the Fifth Annual Waterloo Region Migration Film Festival in 2021 December, hosting eight films with the filmmakers, academics and many residents discussing many aspects of immigration in Canada and around the world.
- Curated and promoted the Anti-Racism Resources for Waterloo Region webpage as a resource for community members to educate themselves about racism and discrimination and access tools to help them take action against hate and racism.

Collaborate with systems and community tables and leaders

- Continue to work closely with the Psychosocial and Spiritual Supports Working Group and Cambridge Mobilization Team to help vulnerable communities access supports during the pandemic.

What did immigrants tell us about why they chose and stayed in Waterloo Region?

As federal skilled worker immigrants, we chose Waterloo Region because we wanted to live a small family oriented community. We needed a friendly environment to grow our small family. Kitchener seemed like the best option after months of research.

- 2021 Immigrant Survey respondent

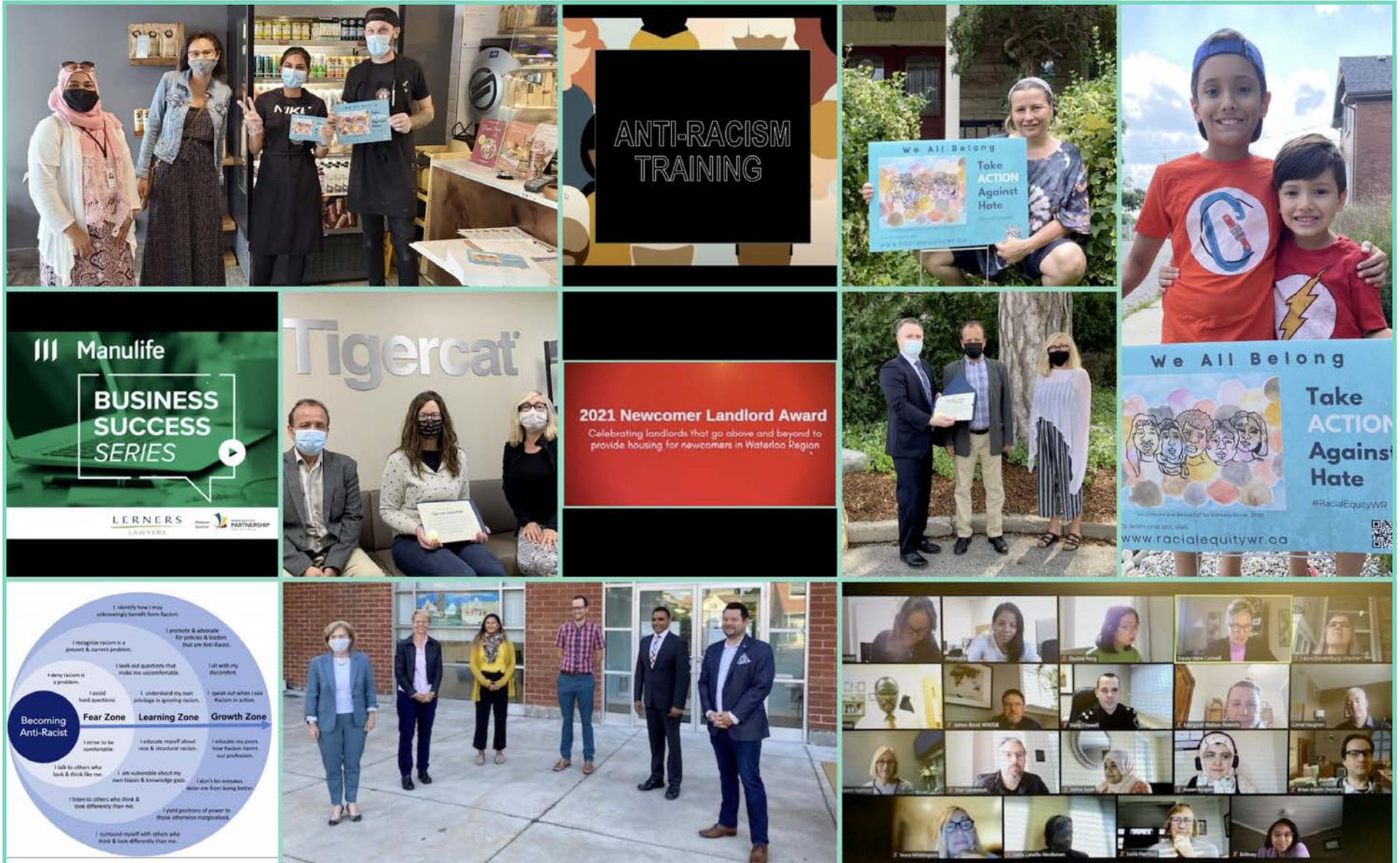
I consider Waterloo Region to be my home. This is where I've spent most of my life. I have family and friends here. There have always been good opportunities for me and my family here in the region, and I believe the region is a good place to raise a family.

- 2021 Immigrant Survey respondent

I loved the Waterloo area a lot because of the community's acceptance and welcome for newcomers, which makes me feel reassured and comfortable.

- 2021 Immigrant Survey respondent

Working together to be a more welcoming, inclusive and anti-racist community





For information or an alternative format:

Phone: 519-575-4757 ext. 3172

Deaf and hard of hearing (TTY): 519-575-4608

Email: ImmigrationPartnership@regionofwaterloo.ca

235 King Street East, Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4N5

Join us in building community through immigration

   @ImmigrationWR

www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca



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