

Building community through immigration



Immigration Partnership Annual Report
2022-2023





Waterloo Region: A place of home and opportunity for thousands of newcomers

Region of Waterloo Now Among Top 5 Big Urban Areas in Canada for Immigration

The Region of Waterloo is in the midst of an immigration boom. From 2016 to 2021, Statistics Canada says nearly 28,000 new immigrants have taken up residence in the region – twice as many as in the five years prior. That also means the Waterloo Region is now among the top five big urban areas in the country when it comes to immigration and, with that boom, a boon for the character of the region itself.

- CityNews Everywhere, November 02, 2022

New community members from around the world making connections to local services at the “Newcomer Info Night” hosted by the KW Multicultural Centre on Sept 14 during Welcoming Week 2022.



About Immigration Partnership



Immigration Partnership Council and Steering Group leaders and staff engaging in team building, strategic discussions and priority setting at a leadership retreat on December 7, 2022.

Since 2009, the Immigration Partnership has been a platform for partners to work together to build community through immigration by creating the conditions for immigrants to succeed in Waterloo Region. 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 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 Vision is that immigrants reach their full potential and contribute to creating and sustaining a thriving, prosperous community for everyone.

Our Mission: We work together to create the conditions for immigrants to succeed and help build a welcoming, dynamic community.

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.

Building community through immigration

This report marks the third of Waterloo Region's five-year strategy for building community through immigration.

It was the third year of living and working through a global pandemic, and a time of striving towards post-pandemic living. A year spent identifying and addressing the unfolding outcomes of isolation, mental health struggles, social and economic challenges, education interruptions, employer struggles, employee burnout and more. Hundreds of thousands of people were forcibly displaced due to the ongoing war in Ukraine and the massive earthquake that rocked Turkey and Syria, and Canada responded with welcome. Hate and racism continued to rise.

Canada had another year of record high immigration, welcoming over 437,000 new permanent residents and more than 600,000 new temporary residents. We welcomed thousands of new residents to Waterloo Region communities, including many Afghan and other refugees and Ukrainians fleeing war.

Throughout this year, we began to again come together in person. Residents elected new municipal councils that will steward community and economic development for the next four years. The network of partners and allies supporting immigrants grew. The work of our Refugee Task Force continued. Our amazing partners and the talented team that provides strategic and operational support to our collective work found creative ways to address the evolving needs of the community. They continued on the path of anti-racist change and worked together to ensure all immigrants are able to reach their highest potential. In the spirit of partnership we held each other accountable for doing better for everyone in our community.

This report is a tribute to our incredible community partners and the growing immigrant community that is helping make Waterloo Region a better place to live for everyone. We hope you enjoy this snapshot of the many people and partners that make up the Immigration Partnership and some of the ways we are collectively building community through immigration..

- Tara Bedard, Executive Director

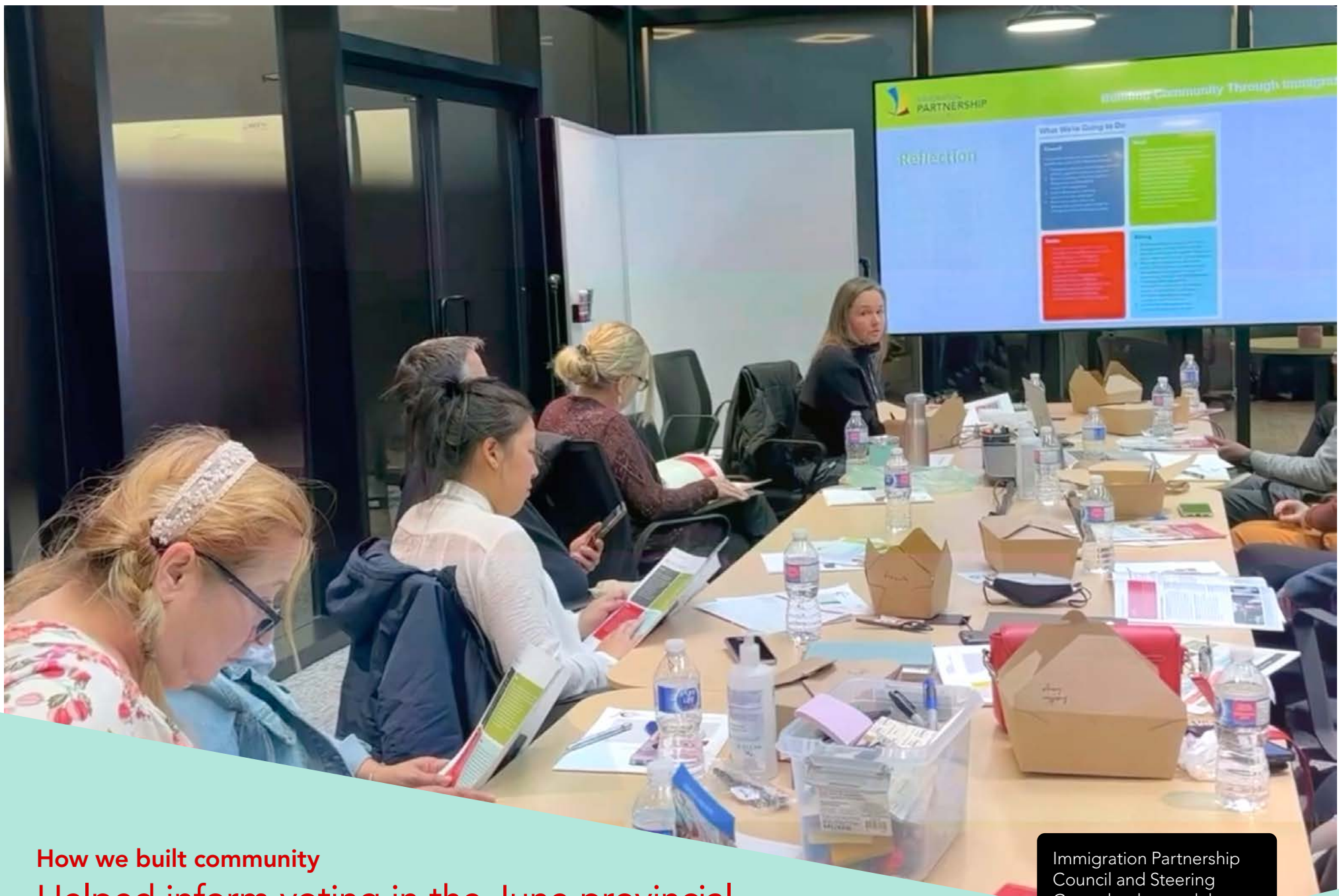


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Canada aims to welcome 465,000 new permanent residents in 2023, 485,000 in 2024 and 500,000 in 2025

- [Government of Canada, November 1, 2022](#)

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How we built community
Helped inform voting in the June provincial
elections through a public survey of local candidates

Immigration Partnership
Council and Steering
Group leaders and the
Immigration Partnership
staff team at a Leadership
Retreat. December 7, 2022.



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 Immigration Partnership's Steering Groups.

Immigration Partnership Council:

Tracey Hare Connell (Chair), The Coaching Co
Dr Ernest Osei (Vice Chair), Community Member
Anna Schwarz (SSG Chair), YMCA of Three Rivers Immigrant Services
Ian McLean (WSG Chair), Greater KW Chamber of Commerce
Brittney Emslie (BSG Chair), KW Multicultural Centre
Brian Kamm, United Way Waterloo Region Communities
Dauda Raji, House of Friendship
Katherine Peterson, YMCA of Three Rivers Immigrant Services
Lucia Harrison, KW Multicultural Centre
Prof Margaret Walton Roberts, Wilfrid Laurier University
Murray Gamble, The C3 Group of Companies
Peter Sweeney, Region of Waterloo, Commissioner, Community Services
Shannon Down, Waterloo Region Community Legal Services
Conal Vaughan, Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (ex officio)
Janet Stanley, Ontario Ministries of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and Seniors and Accessibility (ex officio)



Serenia Life Financial CEO & CMO presenting a cheque for \$36,820 to the Immigration Partnership Fund for Immigrant and Refugee Initiatives. This contribution, raised through Serenia's donation-matching fundraiser, enabled the Immigration Partnership Council to financially support local programs for Ukrainian families seeking refuge in Waterloo Region. May 2022.

(...) Along with the already existing community of Ukrainians within the area, Chair Redman believes that Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership will be a big help in acclimatizing these individuals to their new country. "This organization is significant because it reaches into the faith community, the new Canadian community, the business community, and will ensure that we set up people for success when they find themselves immigrating."

- Regional Chair asks residents to welcome Ukrainian refugees with kindness, CityNews Everywhere, March 3, 2022

2022-2023 Alumni:

Della Lataille-Herdsman and James Bond, Waterloo Region District School Board

Laura Stoutenburg (SSG Past Chair), Conestoga College LINC Program

Pari Karem, YMCA of Three Rivers Immigrant Services

Sonja Erstic, Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration (ex officio)

Stephanie Schreuders (SSG Past Chair), Mennonite Central Committee Ontario

Strategic and operational staff leadership: Tara Bedard, Pauline Peng, Alejandra Amezcua Gutierrez and Diana Carrillo Joya

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



How we built community

Advocated for federal and provincial investments in the wellbeing of immigrants through participation in budget consultations and roundtables

How we built community

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

- Through the Immigration Partnership Council's Refugee Task Force, engaged housing, education, health and other community leaders in addressing systems and operational issues experienced by Afghan and other refugees, Ukrainians fleeing war and refugee claimants.
- Advocated for federal and provincial investments in the wellbeing of immigrants through participation in budget consultations and roundtables.
- Advocated for secure long-term investment in medical interpretation in Waterloo Region by Ontario Health in collaboration with area Ontario Health Teams and other partners.
- Helped inform voting in the June provincial elections through a [public survey of local candidates](#) on health equity measures, immigrant employment and support for anti-racism initiatives.
- Consulted Grand River Hospital to inform equity focus in upcoming development of its Clinical Services Plan.

Built awareness of the Immigration Partnership and beneficial impact of immigration

- Continued to grow collaboration with local media to disseminate [stories of immigration](#) and the Immigration Partnership's collective work to build a more inclusive and fair community with over 30 pieces broadcast in print, radio and online.
- On National Child Day, shared via social media [the career aspirations of young refugees](#) participating in the Reception House Waterloo Region's New Canadian Youth Connection Program and the Kitchener Waterloo Multicultural Centre's Let's Talk program.
- Engaged with area Rotary, Probus and other service clubs to grow awareness of the Immigration Partnership and immigration experiences in Waterloo Region.
- Expanded engagement with over 5,697 followers, 1,627 posts and 627,167 impressions on social media to promote the positive benefits of immigration, newcomer integration initiatives and the collaborative work of the Immigration Partnership.
- Increased community knowledge and capacity to support immigrants by providing nearly 741 subscribers and 35,381 visitors with curated content through the Immigration Weekly and [Immigration Waterloo Region website](#) on settlement, refugee integration, employment, community donations, business supports, immigration research, pandemic developments, public health guidelines and multilingual resources.

How we built community

Advocated for secure long-term investment in medical interpretation in Waterloo Region by Ontario Health

Strengthened trust, relationships, collaborative learning and community education

- Continued the Immigration Partnership's implementation of its Anti-Racism Commitment, and together with the Children and Youth Planning Table and Wellbeing Waterloo Region hosted learning sessions for over 100 leaders in Waterloo Region on White Supremacy to further build community capacity for anti-racist organizational change.
- Helped build national research capacity on immigration as co-chair of the National Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) Research Working Group made up of LIPs across Canada. Hosted a lunch and learn workshop for nearly 60 Local Immigration Partnership representatives on availability and analysis of community level new permanent resident arrivals monthly data.
- Informed policy and planning by developing and disseminating five profiles with insights on immigrant experiences of housing, as well experiences of living in the cities of Waterloo, Kitchener, Cambridge and in the rural townships based on responses to the Immigration Partnership's 2021 Immigrant Survey.
- Helped build equitable research capacity among local partners, communities across Canada and within Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada by sharing experience with community surveys, research outreach, immigration data, survey translation, etc.

- Engaged with immigration leaders across Canada at the Pathways to Prosperity 2022 National Conference in Ottawa to share experiences from Waterloo Region and learn from other communities.
- Shared the 2022 Partner Survey results on how the collaborative work of the Immigration Partnership is contributing to build more welcoming communities for immigrants and refugees: 91% of the respondents felt that IP is achieving its mission and 93% feeling that IP is focused on the critical issues for immigrants in our community.

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

- Expanded partnerships with the Region of Waterloo and the Waterloo Region Community Foundation (WRCF) to direct community investments for immigrant and refugee success. Allocated \$1,164,040 in funding for local initiatives from the WRCF hosted-Immigration Partnership Fund for Immigrant and Refugee Initiatives and the Region of Waterloo supported-Fund for Immigrant Economic Wellbeing.
- Continued collaboration with the Children and Youth Planning Table and Wellbeing Waterloo Region to build governance, data and evaluation, public education framework aligned with a focus on racism and equity.

How we built community
Continued to grow collaboration with local media to disseminate stories of immigration and the Immigration Partnership's collective work

The power of community: Supporting refugees in Waterloo Region

Last year millions of people left their homes in search of refuge due to conflicts in Afghanistan, Ukraine and other countries. For hundreds of years Waterloo Region has opened its arms to provide home and a fresh start to refugees.

In the last year, Waterloo Region **welcomed more than 2,200 refugees** from Afghanistan and other countries, Ukrainians fleeing war and refugee claimants.

Settlement and other community service partners, residents, businesses and grassroots groups **together support refugees** arriving in our region.

Through the Immigration Partnership Council Refugee Task Force, immigrant, health and community service leaders **came together in 2022 to find solutions to housing, education, health care and other challenges**. At the same time, a significant grassroots response to the Ukrainian crisis **brought forward hundreds of residents to support Ukrainians** arriving in the region, and efforts were made to align organizational and grassroots responses for sustainable supports.



“Waterloo Region has many organizations, programs and services that provide excellent support to newcomers as they start a new life here. Immigration to Waterloo Region has grown quickly in recent years, and we are currently welcoming many Ukrainians fleeing war and Afghan and other refugees. The Immigration Partnership Funds will enable local organizations, groups and individuals the opportunity and flexibility to address the most pressing needs of newcomers and launch new initiatives to help set them on the path to success.”

- Immigration Partnership Council Chair Tracey Hare Connell

The Immigration Partnership launched two open calls for **initiatives that facilitate the integration of immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region** through [the Immigration Partnership Fund for Immigrant and Refugee Initiatives](#) and the [Fund for Immigrant Economic Wellbeing](#).

Immigration Partnership
▶
Fund

Through the incredible generosity of residents, public, non-profit and private organizations like [Cloverleaf Foundation](#) and [Serenia Life Financial](#), and partnerships with the Region of Waterloo and Waterloo Region Community Foundation (WRCF), the Immigration Partnership Council allocated **\$1,164,040 in funding to support 28 immigrant and refugee supporting initiatives**. Funded programs will meet some of the most pressing needs experienced by refugee families living in the region, such as housing, programming for children and adults, transportation, English classes, access to technology and other essentials.



How we built community

Convened Waterloo Region's Refugee Task Force to provide strategic and operational oversight to refugee welcoming and settlement efforts

Newcomers from Ukraine at the "Newcomer Info Night" event looking to connect with community services to settle and integrate in the region September 14, 2022.



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:

Anna Schwarz (Chair), YMCA of Three Rivers Immigrant Services
Charlene Mak (Vice Chair), International Student Advisor Group & Wilfrid Laurier University
Laura Stoutenburg (Past Chair), Conestoga College
Stephanie Schreuders (Past Vice Chair), Mennonite Central Committee Ontario
Alana Banton, Region of Waterloo, Housing
Almira Hodzic, Lesline Fehr, Natalie Hughes and Xiaoshuo Gao, Conestoga College
Ana Luz Martinez, KW Multicultural Centre
Angie Pham, Imtenan Abd-El Razik and Rachael Lake, Waterloo Region Community Legal Services
Dauda Raji and Nermin Ozdemir, House of Friendship
Debbie Engel, Carizon Family and Community Services
Duaa Al-aghar and Rozina Shaheen, Muslim Social Services of KW
Eliseo Martell, Community Member
Erica Dudzus, Kitchener Public Library
Faduma Musse, Somali Canadian Association of Waterloo Region
Hoda Ghonim, SHORE Centre
Isaiah Ritzmann, The Working Centre
Janet Waito and Pauleen Payne, St Louis Adult Learning Centres
Jean De Dieu Basabose, College Boreal
Jenna Hennebry, Wilfrid Laurier University
Jenni Wagler, COMPASS Refugee Centre
Lidia Gomez, English at First



Township of Wellesley couple Lisa Weiler Haskins and Rich Hamming and the Gurtovyi family from Ukraine, sharing their experience in the "This is Home" Series, a project with Compass Refugee Centre and Reception House Waterloo Region featuring landlords who have helped create a caring community that supports immigrants and the journey of newcomers to find a home. November 2022.

“Immigration Partnership Waterloo Region works with dozens of local agencies that help new immigrants settle in the region and is working with local Ukrainian churches to make them aware of what services and supports are available to Ukrainians arriving in Canada.
- There is no one place when it comes to the Ukrainian response,
The Record, March 28, 2022”

Linda Terry, Age Friendly Network of Waterloo Region
Lynne Griffiths-Fulton, Reception House Waterloo Region
Mayada Abou Warda, KDCHC/Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre
Priscilla Muzira, AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener Waterloo and Area
Shariqua Raza and Ashi Nasim, Muslim Women of Cambridge
Sheryl Mascoll, Region of Waterloo, Home Child Care
Wajma Attayi and Carolyn Beukeboom, Centre for Family Medicine
Wisam Osman, Coalition of Muslim Women KW
Yesenia Torres, City of Cambridge
Zeri Zigeta, Kinbridge Neighbourhood Association

Corresponding Members:

Ajirioghene Evi-Cobbinah, Kind Minds Family Wellness
Jennifer Ardon, Lutheran World Relief
Kristine Marchetti, Crystal Swinton and Jennifer Staples, Region of Waterloo Public Health
Lilliana Araujo, Community Member
Rana Shami, Kids Ability Canada
Shannon Down, Waterloo Region Community Legal Services
Shelley Campagnola, COMPASS Refugee Centre
Siba Al-Khadour, Levant

Action Group Members:

Ailton Santana and Farida Allie, Community Members
Andrew Ramsaroop, City of Kitchener
Brittany Bridge, Region of Waterloo, Housing
Brittney Emslie, KW Multicultural Centre
Crystal Cormier, Sanderson Management Inc.
Cynthia Iheanacho, Kristen Thompson, Joanna Mullen, Ashley Schuitema and Evangelynn Chee, Waterloo Region Community Legal Services
David Alton, Aleksandra Petrovic, Michelle Knight and Hollee George, Social Development Centre Waterloo Region

Diane Wiles, Leadership Waterloo Region
Edwina Toope, Lutherwood
Emma Jennings, Reception House Waterloo Region
Lisa Haskins, Waterloo Region Grassroots Response
Mark Willcock, Indwell
Michelle Lee, City of Waterloo
Nicole Perreira, Supportive Housing of Waterloo (SHOW)
Tera Dargavel, KW Multicultural Centre

2021-2022 Alumni:

Donalee McIntyre, City of Cambridge
Eda Dede, Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre
Ed Kaut, Region of Waterloo, Income Support and Children's Services
Sarah Gilles, Region of Waterloo, Housing

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
Launched Waterloo Region Migrant
Workers Coalition (WRMWC) to build community
capacity to support temporary migrants

How we built community

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

- Seeking to provide refugees with the services they need to settle in the region, shared information about Afghan and Ukrainian settlement needs and activities broadly.
- Developed and disseminated a [language interpretation best practices checklist](#) to support organizations in implementing improved interpretation policies and practices in Waterloo Region and beyond to eliminate language as a barrier to service for residents.
- Informed and supported primary care attachment work by community partners through advocacy and the mapping of refugee residential patterns together with the Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre and Centre for Family Medicine, in collaboration of the Region of Waterloo Geographic Information System (GIS) staff.

- Together with the Centre for Family Medicine and Reception House Waterloo Region, participated in the [Fresh Innovators WR Speaker Series](#), hosted by Leadership Waterloo Region, to talk about how immigrant-serving agencies and organizations are supporting refugees arriving in the region and to encourage community members to support refugee settlement efforts.



How we built community

Developed and disseminated a language interpretation best practices checklist to support organizations in implementing improved interpretation policies and practices

Strengthened collaboration and innovation within the settlement sector

- Launched the Waterloo Region Migrant Workers Coalition (WRMWC) to share information and collectively respond to gaps for migrant and temporary workers in the region. It is exploring opportunities for referrals to services for migrant workers, supporting migrant worker employers, accessing needed data, discussing services for residents with precarious status, and more.
- Helped build connections between the area post secondary institutions and immigrant and other community service partners to expand community supports for international students.
- Brought regional settlement partners together with the Centre for Community Based Research to leverage funding opportunities to understand and action against racism in immigrant settlement in Waterloo Region.
- Consulted with the Mennonite Central Committee Canada and Refugee 613 about their ReSPO project and developing pilot hubs in select communities regarding refugee sponsorship supports.



How we built community

Helped build connections between the area post secondary institutions and immigrant and other community service partners to expand community supports for international students

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

- Supported the Region of Waterloo Housing Division to expand the Equity-Based Portable Rent Assistance Program, for 200 Black, Indigenous, racialized and marginalized families to include East African households in partnership with the Somalian Canadian Association of Waterloo Region.
- Continued to support KW4 Ontario Health Team (OHT) groups to determine health, mental health, and language interpretation resources and pathways for refugees. Utilized immigrant survey findings regarding interpretation in Waterloo Region to inform funding advocacy.
- Along with the Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership and Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council, hosted a virtual panel discussion where over 100 participants from across Ontario learned about the importance of equitable language access to community programs and services.
- Worked with Regional emergency shelter and housing providers and immigrant serving partners to address emerging needs of refugee families accessing the emergency shelter system. Maintained connection to housing and other community action tables to bring forward immigrant perspectives. Provided newcomer-focused input into the City of Waterloo affordable housing strategy.

Encouraged landlords and organizations to provide housing for immigrants

- Celebrated and recognized Lisa Weiler Haskins and Richard Hamming; Heidi Sproul; the Woolwich Community Health Centre; Open Homes KW, Moe Hansrod (KW Property

Management); and Chinh Pham, Tho Tran and Tony Pham with the 2022 Newcomer Landlord Award winners at the November 22 Waterloo Region Housing Day event for helping the newest members of our regional communities find a home.

- Engaged with and provided information to the Waterloo Region Grassroots Response to the Ukrainian Crisis – a local group of about 250 volunteers– to connect them to existing community systems, partners and community groups (e.g. Conestoga College staff supporting international students) to access language, housing and other community supports to help displaced Ukrainians fleeing war and arriving in Waterloo Region.

Partners highlighting the impact of their involvement with the Immigration Partnership.

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I was invited to speak on refugee perspective and youth volunteer impact in our community. I was so impressed to see the attraction of the people toward IP's work.

- 2022 Partner Survey respondent

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Immigrants make up more than a quarter of the region's population: By the numbers

This infographic outlines findings from the [2021 Census](#) by Statistics Canada, which reveals that immigrants accounted for more than half of the region's total population growth.

Waterloo Region is Growing through Immigration

25.4% of the population of Waterloo Region were immigrants in 2021.

This is up from

22.6% in 2016 and

22.3% in 2011 and 2006

The total population of Waterloo Region grew by **52,011** individuals between the 2016 and 2021 censuses. Recent immigrants made up **53.5%** of that growth

The Waterloo Region urban area has the **6th highest proportion of immigrants** across Canada's **41** large urban centres, and is **2nd to Toronto** within Ontario

27,840 immigrants arrived in the 5 years before the 2021 census. This is an increase of **49.6%** from the 2016 Census

Immigrants tend to settle in Waterloo Region's urban areas

Immigrants are more concentrated in urban rather than rural areas – ranging from **29.7%** of the total population in Kitchener to **5.4%** in Wellesley Township

Recent immigrants are more likely to live in urban areas – ranging from **6.4%** of the total population in Kitchener to **0.5%** in North Dumfries

Waterloo Region: Home of many languages

The majority of residents speak official languages at home – with **80.3%** speaking English and **0.3%** speaking French – but a growing proportion most often speak non-official languages

15.2% – 88,290 individuals – most frequently speak a language other than English or French at home

98.0% understand English (**6.3%** are bilingual and know both English and French)

Immigrants are incredibly diverse:

62.5% are from Asia, **19.8%** from Africa, **10.1%** from America and **7.2%** from Europe

The top countries of birth for recent immigrants are **India, Syria, Eritrea, China, Philippines, Pakistan** and **Nigeria**

Between 1980 to 2021, **44%** of immigrants came to Canada under economic categories, **26.7%** were immigrants sponsored by family and **27.7%** were refugees

The top non-English home languages are:

Punjabi, **8,130** people
Mandarin, **7,635** people
Arabic, **6,290** people
Spanish, **5,835** people
Portuguese, **4,645** people



How we built community
Built employer capacity to hire and retain immigrants through more than 25 hosted events

Local employers at the "Beyond Orientation: Integrating and Retaining Immigrants in the Workplace" workshop, organized in partnership with Will Immploy. October 18, 2022.



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 Elkhalifa, 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

Roberto Villamar, Community Member

Sherri Tryon, Conestoga College

Sue Benoit, YourH2R Business Solutions

Tim Callan, Agilec

Tina Baksh, Conestoga College

Strategic and operational staff leadership: Nora Whittington



Speakers at the “Beyond Orientation: Integrating and Retaining Immigrants in the Workplace” workshop, organized in partnership with Will Immploy: Roberto Villamar, Chief Strategy and Compliance Officer, COHECO; Charlene Hofbauer, Executive Director, Workforce Planning Board; Julie Newman, Director of Talent, Engagement & Quality Management, Carizon; and Omar Hussein, Entrepreneur/Consultant. October 18, 2022.

“Currently, 52 per cent of job postings in the area are for high skilled roles that often call for a degree from university. Charlene Hofbauer, executive director of the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin, said this may be because sectors such as insurance, technology and finance are looking to grow and that immigration slowed during the pandemic. Hofbauer said this shift has created a “window of opportunity” for economic immigrants to find work in their respective fields, which wasn’t possible prior to the pandemic.”

- Labour market shift creates ‘window of opportunity’ for immigrants with advanced degrees, CBC News, May 29, 2022

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

- Raised awareness of the value of hiring immigrants through social media messaging, strategic ads and articles in the Chambers of Commerce's publications and directories.
- Promoted via social media other organizational initiatives such as the #ImmigrantsWork campaign by Work Education Services (WES) to support rebuilding Canadian businesses with a focus on immigrant integration.

- Together with immigrant employment partners, networked and built relationships with employers to create employment opportunities for newcomers at Chambers of Commerce "Business After 5" and other events.
- Built employer capacity to hire and retain immigrants through more than 25 hosted events in partnership with the Greater KW Chamber of Commerce, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, Immploy and Southwest Ontario Local Immigration Partnerships. The events provided employers with resources to include top talent from refugee sources; integrate and retain immigrants in the workplace; navigate the work permit process and Global Skills Strategy; create welcoming and inclusive workplaces; build pathways to hiring immigrants; address the gaps in healthcare; become allies against Islamophobia and more.



How we built community

Made progress in development of a one-stop immigrant talent hub by securing seed investment

Conceptualized employer-focused solutions to hiring challenges

- In partnership with World Education Services (WES) and local stakeholders, co-created and released a new resource for employers entitled "Employer Playbook: Strategies for Immigrant Inclusion in Canadian Workplaces." This digital resource contains a collection of accessible, easy-to-implement "made in Waterloo Region" strategies to help employers recruit and hire newcomer talent into diverse and inclusive workforces, drive economic growth and transform the Region.
- Partnered with the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin on the "New Immigration Report: A window of opportunity" to provide research and analysis to help local industry leaders, community partners and policy makers make better informed decisions on how best to support and integrate internationally trained professionals as a key talent pool.
- Made progress in development of a one-stop immigrant talent hub. Learned from other experience in creating talent hubs from the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Magnet and Atlas. Agreed to utilize the FindYourJob.ca platform as virtual host the hub pilot. With the Workforce Planning Board, secured seed funds for programming, marketing, staff and administration.

Promoted employer and immigrant job seeker connections

- Worked closely with employment service partners and employers to build the bridge for immigrants, including Ukrainian workers, to access meaningful employment. Managed dozens of referrals through the Immigration Waterloo Region website and other networks by connecting with partners to access talent for various employers.
- Supported information campaigns like the Workforce Planning Board's "Day in Life" and "First Jobs" social media campaigns to educate youth and newcomers about different sectors that enable them to gain valuable Canadian work experience.
- Created opportunities for local employers and international talent to discuss employment opportunities. Hosted a networking event at the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre's Annual Global Skills Conference.

How we built community
Raised awareness of the value of hiring immigrants through social media messaging, strategic ads and articles in the Chambers of Commerce's publications and directories



- Brought focus to immigration through deepened relationships and collaborations with the regional economic development via Best WR to address workforce gaps, promote programs to support employers and provide input to a forthcoming regional talent strategy.
- Collaborated with the Job Developer Group, Community Employment and Literacy Council (CELC) and Brown Bag Lunch group to help strengthen their work in support of immigrant job seekers.

Collaborated with public, private and not for-profit leaders and organizations to foster immigrant attraction, employment and entrepreneurship

- Supported the Waterloo Region Small Business Centre by promoting their workshops and making connections with immigrant service providers to improve supports for immigrant entrepreneurs.
- Helped strengthen Greater KW Chamber of Commerce equity, diversity and inclusion efforts as a member of the Chamber's DEI Committee.

Partners highlighting the impact of their involvement with the Immigration Partnership.

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Through our involvement and attending the meetings and events organized by IP (Work Steering Group), we have developed a good relationship with many employers. This relationship helped us connect our clients with them. This kind of connection helped our clients have a good opportunity for networking and get hired at the professions they were targeting.

- 2021 Immigrant Survey respondent

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2022 Partner feedback: Our partners on how we are making an impact and what we need to focus on

This infographic outlines findings from the [Immigration Partnership \(IP\) Partner Survey](#) conducted in December 2022.

90
RESPONDENTS:

Partners were **enthusiastic** about the Immigration Partnership's **impact in the community**

93% felt that **IP is focused on the critical issues for immigrants** in our community

90% felt that **IP is a catalyst for effective change**

91% felt that we are **achieving the IP mission**

71% felt that immigration and **engaging/supporting immigrants** is increasingly seen as a priority in planning and implementing policies, services and systems.

55% felt that Waterloo Region has become more **welcoming of immigrants**

Partner focus for the work of IP over the **next two years** includes:

Moving the needle on the **IP vision** with a **dedicated focus** on:

- immigrant employment and employer engagement
- service collaboration, networking and supports and
- housing for immigrants

Helping further **anti-racism efforts** in the community, within partner organization and/or across IP through:

- training and capacity building
- public education and
- centering immigrant leadership in that work

Facilitating actions toward **Indigenous reconciliation** by:

- hosting learning events for IP partners, newcomers and others
- creating resources for newcomers and
- fostering relationships and dialogue with Indigenous groups



How we built community

Built awareness and support of immigration among hundreds of residents during the 2022 Waterloo Region Migration Film Festival

Celebrating International Migrants Day with a screening of "The six" and post-screening discussion with the filmmaker and writer Arthur Jones during the 2022 Waterloo Region Migration Film Festival. Kitchener City Hall. December 15, 2022.



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
Allie Fallis and Sheryl Tilley, Region of Waterloo Libraries
Annabelle Girard, KW Art Gallery
Amy Slack, Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank
Aoussaf Arrout, Kinbridge Community Centre
Aracy Selvakumar and Heather Montgomery, Reception House Waterloo Region
Arcy Canumay, Sustainable WR Travel Wise
Asma Al Wahsh, Canadian Arab Women's Association
Cheryl Faria and Sheryl Mascoll, Region of Waterloo
Cheryl Grove, Wellbeing Waterloo Region
Daniela Montoya, Volunteer Waterloo Region
Dianne Boston-Nyp, Volunteer Waterloo Region
Fadhilah Balogun, CCORIC member, African Women Alliance of Waterloo Region
Fauzia Wafai, Islamic Circle of North America-Canada and Muslim Women of Cambridge
Fidelia Ukueje, NIROW & Children and Youth Planning Table
Gabrielle Laurin, Conseil Scolaire Viamonde
Jessica Their, Carizon Family and Community Services
Julia Gingrich, Waterloo Public Libraries
Kelly Steiss, Marina Dotzert and Paulina Rodriguez, City of Kitchener
Marian Rozman, YMCA of Three Rivers – Cambridge
Marie-Pierre Daoust, Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir
Marwa Gebeil, Kinbridge Community Association



The Belong Steering Group hosted a Multicultural Connections event on employment and volunteerism for ethno-cultural leaders at the KW Art Gallery, Kitchener. June 04, 2022.

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Local groups and organizations that are part of Immigration Partnership have curated a series of films to mark International Migrants Day (Dec. 18) and reflect on migration and related topics that continue to attract the attention of media, governments and communities around the world.

- 2021 Partner Survey respondent

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Mifrah Abid, Coalition of Muslim Women
Nazy Pazoki Zadeh, House of Friendship
aige Monck-Whipp, Waterloo Regional Police Service
Pamela Albrecht, City of Waterloo
Pamela Rojas, Community Member
Renu Bhandari, Focus for Ethnic: Women Waterloo Region Inc.
Rihanat El-Alawa, Waterloo Region District School Board
Rozina Shaheen, Muslim Social Services KW
Saifullah Mohammad, Rohingya Community Centre
Yolande Lansing, Canadian Arab Women's Association
Zohra Wali, City of Cambridge

2022-2023 Alumni:

Aleksandra Petrovic, Social Development Centre Anneke van den Berg, Canadian Arab Women's Association
Aisha Wovenu and Melissa Strachan, Carizon Family and Community Services
Brice Balmer, Interfaith Grand River
Fauzia Baig, CAO, Region of Waterloo
Helen Loftin and Katy Boose, Reception House Waterloo Region
Jaskirat Gill, Waterloo Region Police Service
Kelly Kipfer, Waterloo Public Libraries
Kristen Bustamante and Sophia Stanberry, Region of Waterloo
Marla Pender, City of Kitchener
Niran Akintunde, City of Waterloo
Olga Vigil Letang, City of Cambridge
Paulina Rodriguez, Chief Administrator's Office, Region of Waterloo
Stephen Lavigne, KW Art Gallery
Suzan Koujan, Canadian Arab Women's Association

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
Engaged partners across Waterloo Region in
welcoming new immigrants in an event series during
#WelcomingWeek2022

How we built community

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

- Brought partners together across Waterloo Region to participate in [#WelcomingWeek2022](#), an international movement, in collaboration with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Recognizing that we all have a role to play in building a welcoming community, the week allowed over 600 new members of our community to connect with local services and created opportunities for quality interactions between old and new residents.
- Helped build community connections and capacity for more than 90 members and leaders of local ethno-cultural and faith groups through four Multicultural Connections events focused on how to apply for grants, the benefits of volunteerism, the meaning of territorial acknowledgments, truth and reconciliation and accessible services in Waterloo Region.
- Collaborated and supported the organization of a youth-led program to provide young newcomers with an inclusive and fun space to gain access to opportunities to thrive in Canada, celebrate their culture and access services such as career counseling, mental health, etc.

- Helped to address the caregiving needs and supports of multigenerational immigrant families through the guidance of CMHA Waterloo Wellington by equipping people with information and skills, integrating volunteers into the system of social services, knowledge sharing, looking to schools as a means of disseminating resources to these families and overcoming barriers to accessing community services.

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

- Connected with community partners, ethno-cultural groups and residents to strengthen relationships, share resources and tools to address language and interpretation issues and create connections to specific newcomer/racialized/language groups.
- Supported the City of Cambridge's Newcomer Outreach Program in hosting a newcomer wellness event, planning the Newcomer Day and a bus tour to the Crow Sheild Lodge.
- Working towards Truth and Reconciliation, organized the first in-person post pandemic Belong Steering Group meeting at the Anishnabeg Outreach Centre to create opportunities to empathize with the unique situation of indigenous peoples, immigrants, refugees and promote friendly coexistence. The hosts facilitated a tour and presentation of their services and programs.

How we built community

Continued to build community capacity to address racism and deepened relationships with ethno-cultural leaders and groups



Shannon Markle

Belong Steering Group Vice Chair / Idea Exchange

Increased public support for immigration, and action to address racism and foster immigrant belonging through campaigns and initiatives

- Facilitated continued action to address racism in Waterloo Region through four events to recognize the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21. More than 275 attendees heard reflections from youth and learned about different local anti-racism initiatives working on how to unpack, unlearn and understand the immense impact of racial discrimination in Waterloo Region.
- Encouraged strong community participation in the 2022 #RacialEquityWR campaign to counter racism in Waterloo Region. Distributed 650 free #RacialEquityWR lawn signs through local libraries to enable residents to show their support for ending racism and supporting diversity, belonging and equity for all.
- Engaged more than 520 community members in contemplating and celebrating stories of migration at the 2022 Waterloo Region Migration Film Festival. Fifteen community partners hosted

eleven films and post-screening discussions with filmmakers and academics. It was an opportunity to discuss settlement, refugee experiences, racial discrimination and inclusion in Canada and around the globe.

Collaborate with systems and community tables and leaders

- Participated in the Region of Waterloo's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights (EDI) Working Group to help plan for National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and foster internal change.
- Advised the Region of Waterloo in decision-making and the distribution of its Upstream Fund to support a variety of actions focused on promoting Truth and Reconciliation, equity, diversity, social inclusion and health equity.

Partners highlighting the impact of their involvement with the Immigration Partnership.

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Welcoming Week and Newcomer Info Night were successful! Hopefully events like these help folks to feel more like they belong in our region, and are getting connected to the appropriate resources to help them settle.

- 2022 Partner Survey respondent

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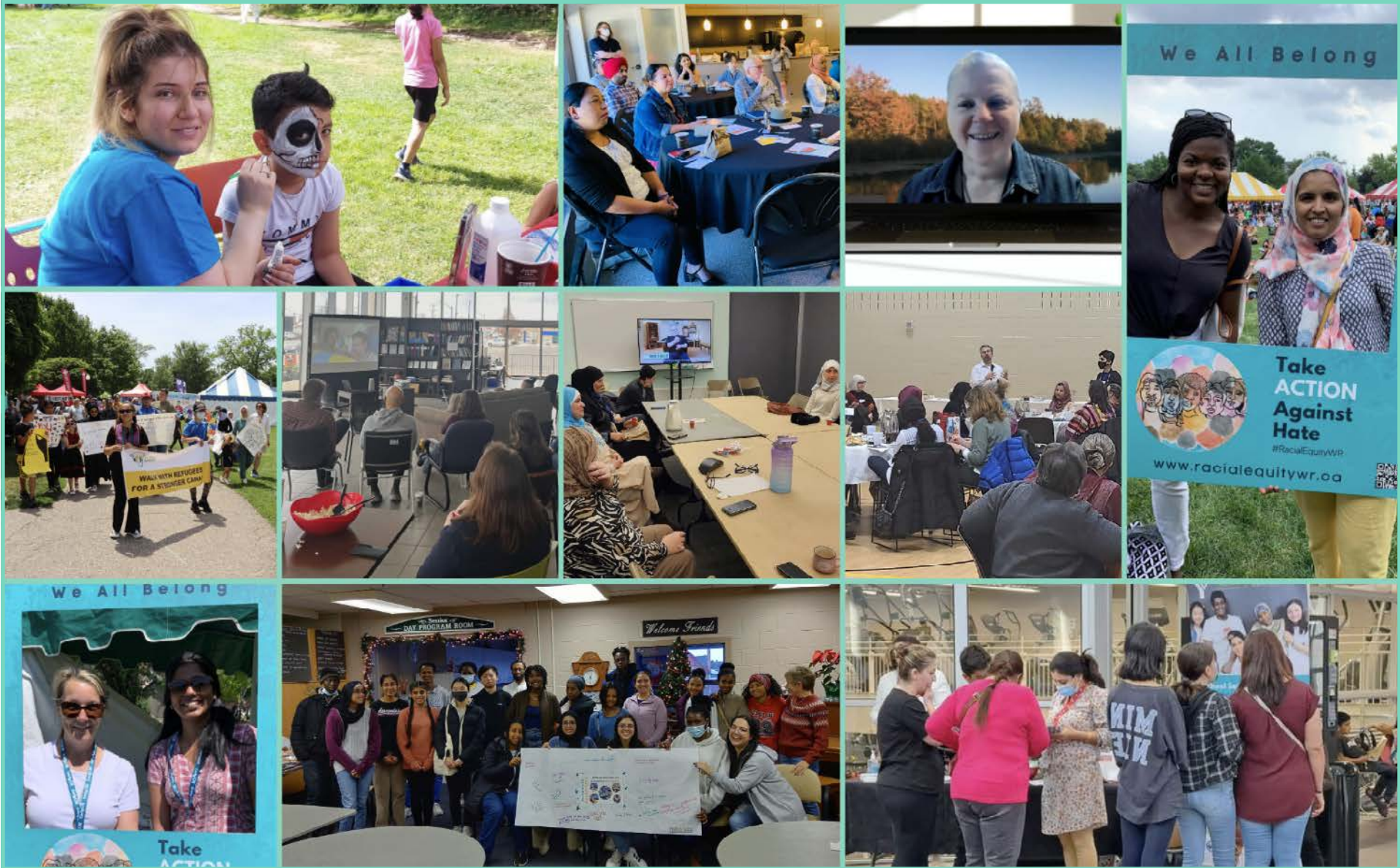
What is the value of our engagement with the Immigration Partnership?

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF OUR
ENGAGEMENT WITH THE
IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP?

5

The image shows a virtual meeting interface. The central area is a light teal slide with the text "WHAT IS THE VALUE OF OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP?" in a black, monospaced font. Below the text is a large black circle with a white number "5" in the center, overlaid on a white crosshair. The slide is framed by a black filmstrip border. On the left side of the filmstrip, there are five video thumbnails of participants: a woman with red hair and glasses, a man with glasses, a man in a yellow sweater, a woman with glasses, and a woman with blonde hair. On the right side, there are four video thumbnails: a woman with long brown hair, a woman in a green hijab, a woman in a black hijab, and a man in a grey sweater.

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





For information or an alternative format:

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

Email: ImmigrationPartnership@regionofwaterloo.ca

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Join us in building community through immigration

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www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca

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