



YMCAs of  
Cambridge &  
Kitchener-Waterloo

# Newcomer Youth Pathway to Belonging Project

2016

Building healthy  
communities

## Waterloo Region is Diverse Community

### What is belonging?

Environments that are created to provide:

- >Authentic interactions
- >Shared experiences
- >Feeling welcome

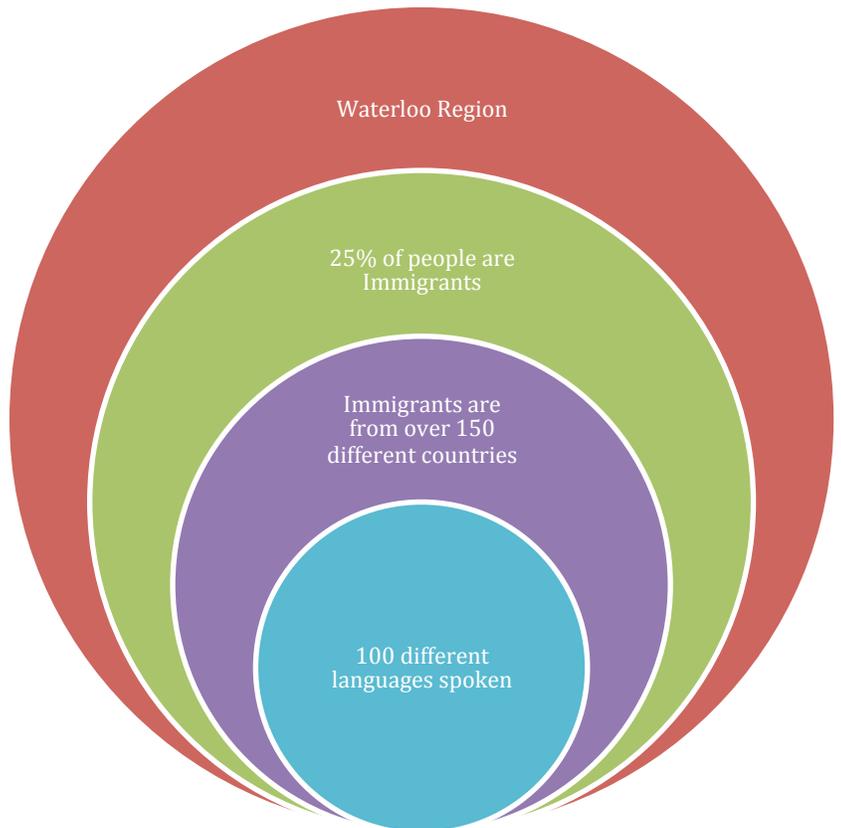
### Why do we need to belong?

Belonging is a human need. A strong sense of community belonging is associated with better health. Some of our sense of self is derived from the groups and organizations we belong to. Just as we need food to eat and a safe place to sleep, we need to feel included, connected, accepted and valued.

### How do we create a sense of belonging?

Belonging is not purely an individual need. It is also a need of communities and organizations. When people feel a strong sense of belonging to a group they are more willing to contribute. For a community, civic engagement and belonging go together: citizens who feel like they belong will be more likely to be involved in the governance of the community, donate their time and resources to improving the community and show caring for others who live in the community.

There are people from many countries and cultures living in Waterloo Region.



While there are many formal supports for newcomer adults and young children, there continues to be a lack of formal and informal supports for newcomer youth in the community.

The transition to life in Canada can be difficult for any newcomer youth but refugee youth in particular often struggle with various issues such as language, culture, poverty and isolation as they try to connect with others and begin their integration process.

# YMCA Newcomer Youth Pathway to Belonging

## The Project

The Newcomer Youth Pathway to Belonging Project is a step towards creating a more intentional, coordinated system of programs and services that respond to the needs of newcomer youth. The Pathway Project will build belonging by empowering youth to grow as individuals and feel a sense of belonging that ultimately allows them to see the value of their community contribution.

**Newcomer Youth 12 – 19 years** will be helped by a **Community Development Specialist** to develop personal connections and relationships with peers and adult role models through interactions that are thoughtfully designed and facilitated through a variety of programs including but not limited to: Newcomer Orientation Week in schools; Newcomer Theatre program; Conversation Circles and YMCA Newcomer Youth Program.

Once youth feel safe, comfortable and connected to small groups and the community, they will have the confidence that enables them to see the value of their community contribution. Programs like Step UP to Leadership; Citizenship Supports and peer mentoring are avenues to help youth develop the skills they need to be active volunteers and civically engaged.

Through the Community Development Specialist, each youth will create a unique pathway created based on their personal interests. The YMCA will support the youth with referrals, connections, experiences and provide access to transportation in attempt to break down barriers.

## A Community Partnership Approach

This work cannot be done alone. The intent is to leverage existing programs and services. There are community partners who work with newcomer youth where they live, play and go to school. Community partners are asked to engage in the project through a variety of means:

- Support the building a community resources of programs and services specific to newcomer youth
- Provide space for the Community Development Specialist to visit with newcomer youth
- Tap into referral processes
- Provide program promotion
- Facilitate access to potential participants

## Contact Information:

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# YMCA NEWCOMER YOUTH PATHWAY MODEL



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