

NEWSLETTER



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What have we been up to?

In Fall of 2025, MSSWR engaged with our community, hosted and collaborated on programs that supported youth, women, and families. From Healing Through Art and Arabic calligraphy to participation in community fairs, wellness events, and conferences, our team connected with students, families, and partners to share resources, build skills, and promote wellbeing. We also celebrated Islamic Heritage Month through meaningful initiatives and invested in professional development to strengthen our team and services.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHT

65 FALL PROGRAM SESSIONS

1672 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

DISTRIBUTED **100+** WINTER
WARMTH KITS

READ MORE BELOW

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HIGHLIGHTS

Accomplishments

We're excited to share that we are now an official member of **OCASI** (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants)



New Staff!



Manahil Khan has joined the team as our new Communications Coordinator. She recently graduated from University of Waterloo and brings experience in marketing, program coordination, and youth development, guided by a passion for impactful, people-centered work.

Holiday Staff Party

MSSWR organized a joyful staff holiday party to celebrate the season and recognize the hard work of our team. It was a wonderful opportunity for staff to connect, relax, and share in the spirit of community and gratitude before the year's end.





PAST AND NEW
PROGRAMS



SEPTEMBER 9 - DECEMBER 2

HEALING THROUGH ART FOR PARENTS AND KIDS

This fall, our Healing Through Art program offered parents a supportive space to explore creativity and strengthen their mental well-being.

Parents and kids then took part in a variety of hands-on crafts and expressive art activities that encouraged reflection, connection, and emotional wellness. With support from the Resilience Project, sessions were held every Tuesday evening at Forest Heights Community Centre, where parents and children participated in their own dedicated classes and grew together as a family.



SEPTEMBER 9 - DECEMBER 2

GIRLS IN SPORT



In partnership with Focus on Ethnic Women, the Girls in Sport Program is dedicated to empowering young women through physical activity, teamwork, and leadership development. The program provides a safe and supportive environment where girls can explore a variety of sports, strengthen their athletic abilities, and build confidence both on and off the field. By encouraging teamwork, discipline, and self-esteem, Girls in Sport helps participants challenge themselves, embrace their strengths, and develop a lifelong appreciation for health and fitness.



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SEPTEMBER 15 - DECEMBER 1

MATH AND ENGLISH TUTORING



We extend our gratitude to our program partner Camino for supporting our free English and Math tutoring program for students in grades 1-12. With the help of our skilled volunteer tutors, students received meaningful academic guidance to boost their skills and succeed in school.

Due to the continued success of the program, the tutoring program will continue next year!



SEPTEMBER 12 - DECEMBER 5

NEIGHBOURS HELPING NEIGHBOURS



With support from the Ontario Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility, the Neighbours Helping Neighbours program at Muslim Social Services Waterloo Region empowers refugee, newcomer, and marginalized women by fostering social connection and community support. This term included workshops, peer groups, hands-on activities, and several guest speakers who shared valuable knowledge and encouragement.

One of these guest speakers, Uma Maharaj from Waterloo Regional Health Network, engaged with participants to hear their concerns and ideas around improving safety, confidence, and access to hospital care. The program continues to provide a safe and inclusive space where women can build confidence, share experiences, and access important resources.



MAY 14 - OCTOBER 29 MINDFUL GARDENING

Our Mindful Community Gardening Project is more than planting seeds - it is about cultivating wellness, connection, and sustainability. In partnership with Crow Shield Lodge and Wisahkotewinowak, the project brings Muslim and Indigenous community members together through shared stewardship of the land, while supporting seniors, strengthening intergenerational relationships, addressing food insecurity, and honouring Indigenous land-based knowledge.

Running from May to October, the season concluded with a community potluck and garden clean-up, where participants shared their favourite dishes, prepared the garden for fall, and connected with nature and one another. We also held a Truth and Reconciliation garden gathering, which you can read more about on page 8.

Through mindful gardening, we continue to nurture the earth while building meaningful relationships and supporting the well-being of our community.



The Alice (Braley)
Judges - Walter
Judges Fund



Greater KW Chamber
of Commerce -
Corporate Challenge
Fund



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FALL EVENTS



TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMUNITY GARDEN GATHERING



Mindful Gardening Program



To honour this important day, we hosted a Truth and Reconciliation Community Garden Gathering at the Queen Street Community Garden, which we share with Wisahkotewinowak and Crow Shield Lodge, two Indigenous-led organizations in the Waterloo Region. This special potluck event created a warm and welcoming space for our community to come together in a meaningful way, sharing food, stories, and reflection.

It was an opportunity to deepen our understanding, strengthen relationships, and recognize the importance of ongoing learning and action in support of Truth and Reconciliation. Through connection, conversation, and community spirit, we honoured the day with intention and respect.



CELEBRATING CULTURE THROUGH ARABIC CALLIGRAPHY



This fall, our Arabic Calligraphy workshop introduced a special series of Arabic calligraphy workshops led by a skilled calligrapher, giving participants a chance to explore creativity, cultural expression, and new artistic techniques. The pieces they created became a highlight of the program, reflecting both personal growth and collective accomplishment.

On October 6, we were invited by the Muslim Women of Cambridge for an Islamic Heritage Month celebration, where we hosted a booth and proudly showcased our participants' artwork. It was a meaningful opportunity for them to share their creations with the wider community, build confidence, and feel recognized for their talents.



Arabic Calligraphy Workshop



MSSWR PLANTS ROOTS FOR THE FUTURE



REEP 25th Anniversary



MSSWR was honoured to attend REEP Green Solutions' 25th Anniversary Celebration and Tree Planting at REEP House, MSSWR and Wisahk Gardens. As part of the event, our team participated in planting a tree for MSSWR. We marked this moment as part of Islamic Heritage Month, using the tree planting to symbolize values of stewardship of the land, sustainability, and care for future generations.

This meaningful act reflected our commitment to environmental responsibility, community connection, and partnerships that promote collective wellbeing. We thank REEP Green Solutions for inviting us to be part of this milestone and for 25 years of impactful work in Waterloo Region.



WARM WINTER KIT ASSEMBLY



IRC x WLU x
MSSWR



The Winter Warmth Assembly Kits initiative was a collaborative effort between MSSWR and Islamic Relief Canada aimed at supporting vulnerable members of our community during the colder months. Together, we assembled **100 Winter Warmth Kits**, each thoughtfully prepared with essential personal care and seasonal items, including toothbrushes and toothpaste, lip balm, deodorant, socks, hats, scarves, hand warmers, hand lotion, shampoo, soap, female hygiene products, and alcohol wipes.

This initiative was made possible through the support of Islamic Relief Laurier at Wilfrid Laurier University, along with the dedication of over 15 volunteers who contributed their time and effort to assemble the kits. The completed kits were distributed across the Waterloo Region to newcomers, refugees, low-income families, and individuals experiencing homelessness, helping provide comfort, dignity, and warmth during the winter season.



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TESTIMONIALS

STORY OF IMPACT: GIRLS IN SPORT PROGRAM

A young girl new to Canada entered MSSWR's Girls in Sport Program feeling socially isolated, lacking confidence, and unfamiliar with organized sports. Within the program's safe and culturally responsive environment, she slowly began to participate, form friendships, and believe in her abilities. By the end of the program, her communication skills, self-esteem, and comfort in group settings had noticeably improved, with her family also observing positive changes at home. **Her experience reflects the program's broader impact in supporting newcomer and racialized girls to build confidence, connection, and a sense of belonging through inclusive recreation.**

A FAMILY STORY OF HEALING AND BELONGING

During a difficult period of resettlement marked by stress, isolation, and trauma, a family was connected to MSSWR for support. Through programs such as Neighbours Helping Neighbours, Healing Through Art, Mindful Community Gardening, Girls in Sport, and Tutoring, each family member accessed meaningful supports, **building confidence, reducing stress, strengthening emotional well-being, and developing social connections.** Over time, the family reported improved mental health, increased stability, and a renewed sense of belonging. Their experience highlights the impact of **MSSWR's wrap-around, culturally responsive programs in helping families heal, grow, and thrive.**

A YOUTH VOLUNTEER'S STORY OF GROWTH & LEADERSHIP

While navigating high school as a newcomer, a student began volunteering with MSSWR in hopes of giving back and building confidence. By supporting multiple programs, she found a welcoming environment where she **developed key skills, formed strong relationships, and received guidance from staff and mentors.** Her commitment and reliability led to increased responsibility, eventually resulting in a Program Facilitator role within the Tutoring Program. Today, she serves as a role model for other youth, demonstrating how meaningful volunteer opportunities can foster **leadership, growth, and lasting community impact.**

SUPPORT OUR WORK

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GALLERY



STAFF IN THE COMMUNITY

MARCH OF 1000 UMBRELLAS

Our team attended an annual community event hosted by **United Way Waterloo Region Communities** to raise awareness and funds for essential services in our region.



LAURIER'S COMMUNITY AGENCY FAIR

MSSWR attended Wilfrid Laurier University's **Community Agency Fair**, where our team connected with MSW students to share our programs, culturally and spiritually sensitive services, and practicum opportunities.



YMCA OF THREE RIVERS CHILD HEALTH FAIR

Staff participated as a Resource Partner at the **Child Health Fair**, connecting with families and sharing information about support programs available in the community.



WRDSB STUDENT WELLNESS CONFERENCE

MSSWR joined WRDSB's **Find Your Balance Student Wellness Conference**, where our team led workshops on mental health and shared resources at our information booth.



BLUEVALE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE'S WELLNESS EXPO 2025

MSSWR attended the **2025 Tournament of Hope Wellness Expo** at Bluevale Collegiate Institute, connecting with students and staff to share information about our programs and community supports.



STAFF

IN THE COMMUNITY

DAR AL-AMAN OPEN HOUSE

MSSWR's Outreach and Settlement Worker, Malik, attended the **Dar Al-Aman Open House with the Coalition of Muslim Women**, connecting with partners and strengthening collaborations to support safety, inclusion, and empowerment.



WE ALL BELONG HERE ANTI-HATE COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

MSSWR joined the launch of the Region of Waterloo's **We All Belong Here** campaign, reinforcing our commitment to combating hate and Islamophobia through counselling, programs, and advocacy that promote inclusion and belonging.



CYPT 4TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MSSWR attended the **CYPT 4th Annual Conference**, exploring ways to strengthen belonging for children and youth in Waterloo Region and engaging in discussions on Indigenous knowledge, youth leadership, and community collaboration.



CAPACITY CANADA BOOT CAMP

Our Executive Director had the opportunity to attend the **Capacity Canada Boot Camp**, a hands-on program designed to build leadership capacity and strengthen non-profit organizations. The experience offered practical strategies and fresh perspectives that will help enhance our programs and community impact.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION

MSSWR attended the **"Onboarding That Works"** workshop, gaining insights into effective onboarding, staff retention, and building inclusive workplaces to strengthen our programs and community impact.





WINTER 2026

**WHATS
COMING UP**





A month of giving

A YEAR OF IMPACT

**Stay tuned for our
Ramadan Impact Campaign**

WINTER PROGRAMMING

STARTS JANUARY 19, 2026

Registration now open!

www.msswr.org/ourprograms

Save
The
Date

EMPOWER &
ELEVATE
Gala

June 11, 2026

Stay tuned for more details!

Arabic Language Program



Read the Qur'an in Arabic

led Dr. Murad

REGISTER



Find more details on our social media!



WELCOME 2026

Become a Donor!

Together, we can build a strong community that supports culturally informed, customized services for programs and mental health supports. With your donation, you contribute to newcomers expanding their personal capacity, gaining self-confidence, and developing resilience. Your support means hope and a better future for many. Let's create change together and positively influence lives!

Scan the QR code, or
click the button to donate!

DONATE NOW







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