



# Muslim Social Services Waterloo Region



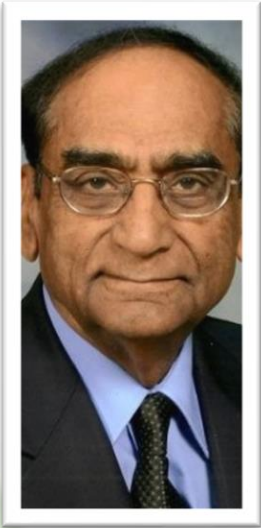
## Annual Report 2023

[www.muslimsocialserviceskw.org](http://www.muslimsocialserviceskw.org)



Accredited  
IMAGINE CANADA

# Message From Board Chair & Executive Director



Assalamualaikum friends and supporters,

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with immense pride and gratitude for the incredible strides Muslim Social Services (MSSWR) has made. Our dedicated team, compassionate volunteers, and supportive community have worked tirelessly to create a meaningful impact and foster a sense of belonging for all. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the incredible funders, donors, and sponsors who have wholeheartedly supported our organization. We would also like to extend a warm welcome to all the new staff members who have joined us during this past year. In addition, we have welcomed two new board members: Sr. Takhmina Shokirova and Asu Negash. We are immensely proud of our dedicated staff and board members who work tirelessly to make a profound difference in the lives of those we serve. Together, we share a vision of fostering an inclusive and resilient community. Our aim is to create an environment where those who benefit from our programs and services will not only survive but truly thrive.



This year, MSSWR has expanded its reach through new partnerships and programs, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to serving the diverse needs of our community. We have collaborated with esteemed organizations such as Reception House, CJI, White Owl, Lutherwood Employment Services, Family and Children Services WR, WRDSB, WRPS, and Women's Crisis Services. These partnerships have enabled us to provide comprehensive support and resources to those who need it most.

Specifically, we would like to extend our gratitude to Upstream Waterloo Region, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, the Astley Foundation, the Resiliency Project, and Waterloo Community Foundation for their invaluable collaboration and partnership. Your generous contributions have allowed us to expand our services, develop new programs, and reach more individuals and families in need.

Our accomplishments speak volumes about the dedication and hard work of our staff and volunteers. We have prepared 250 meals for the homeless, distributed 400 warmth kits, hosted community events, and provided more than 2,500 hours of essential counselling services. These efforts have touched countless lives, offering hope and support during challenging times.

We are also thrilled to announce our nomination for the Community Impact United Way WRC Spirit Award. This recognition is a testament to our commitment to positive change and the profound impact we have on the lives of individuals in the Waterloo Region. Looking ahead, we are excited to implement our new strategic plan, guiding MSSWR through 2028. This plan will ensure we continue to grow, adapt, and serve our community effectively, meeting the evolving needs and challenges of the future.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Duaa Al-Aghar (Executive Director) and Khalid Khokar (Board Chair)



# Mission, Vision, and Values

## Mission

MSSWR is a charitable organization that provides culturally- and spiritually sensitive humanitarian and social services to the Muslim and non-Muslim communities of the Waterloo Region. Our mission is to build community capacity through education, empowerment, advocacy, and collaboration, along with providing mental health supports and services that are grounded in spirituality and values of the Islamic faith.

## Vision

A healthy, thriving and inclusive region where all people can live with dignity and respect.

## Values

At MSSWR we believe in...

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** - Supporting the diversity within our community so that all people are given equal opportunities and treatment, are included and supported, and are engaged in a fair and equitable manner.

**Respect and Compassion** - Accepting each person as they are, being non-judgmental in our work with them, and acting with sincerity and generosity, kindness and compassion in meeting the needs of all people we support.

**Social Justice** - Creating a society that encourages and celebrates the value of each person as an integral and equal member of our community.

**Confidentiality** - Holding the highest regard for the trust and privacy of each client and ensuring the application of the highest professional and ethical standards in all our work.



**Collaboration** - Cultivating outstanding relationships with the people of the community, our clients, partners, and others, that are reciprocal in nature and are rooted in equity, compassion, and respect.

**Celebrate** - Always celebrating the importance of building capacity within our families, partners, donors, and the entire community.

**Accountability** - Being accountable for the decisions we make, how we use the resources provided to us, and acting with integrity in all that we do.

# Strategic Goals and Priorities

## Strategic Priorities



## Strategic Goals

1. Be a Competent, Thriving, Organization

2. Build, Strengthen, & Broaden Partnerships

4. Be a Leader in Faith-Based, Culturally Sensitive Programming

3. Be a Pulse for the Community

5. Be a Key Accessible and Diverse Service Hub



# Highlights of 2023

## Distributing Warmth Kits to Unhoused People

- Collaboration with Islamic Relief Canada
- Distributed over 400 Warmth Winter Kits to unhoused individuals
- Provided hygiene supplies and blankets to Ray of Hope and Women's Crisis Centre
- Extended our reach to YWCA shelters

## Mental Health at The Intersections

- Hosted the 'Mental Health at the Intersections' event
- Thank you to Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health, Kind Minds Family Wellness, and Bridge to Belonging
- Grateful to the staff, volunteers, and speakers

## Annual Community Iftar Dinner

- Event was a testament to unity, compassion, and the essence of Ramadan
- Numerous community leaders and organizations in attendance
- Many donated to Islamic Relief to aid Palestine

## New Collaborations and Partnerships

- 24 new partnerships and collaborations with local organizations

## Ramadan Food Drive

- distributed 100+ food boxes to families throughout Waterloo Region.
- thanks to support of many partner organizations and community members
- Ongoing efforts to combat food insecurity, we need your continued support

## On The Table with WRCF

- Collaborated with WRCF
- Discuss social infrastructure – the organizations, spaces, and experiences that help people connect, build trust, foster civic participation, and create a sense of belonging
- Brought together community members from diverse
- Many attendees shared how they feel a sense of belonging at MSS

## Cooking for Unhoused Individuals

- Collaboration with Islamic Relief Canada
- Cooked and distribute 200+ meals to unhoused people at Ray of Hope

## Community Impact United Way WRC Spirit Award Nomination

- Recognition highlights MSS' dedication to serving the community and making a positive impact
- Appreciation to United Way and our supporters





# Key Accomplishments

**5000+**

Community Members Served

**2500+**

Counselling Hours Provided

**200**

Meals Cooked for Unhoused

**100**

Program Participants

**500**

Community Events Attendees

**20 New**

Partnerships

**250**

Food Baskets Served

**80**

Volunteers

**400**

Warmth Kits Distributed

**500**

Refugees and Immigrants Provided  
with Comprehensive Support

# Counselling



Muslim Social Services strives to provide a safe and culturally sensitive therapeutic environment that aims to help its diverse community of clients through their journey in understanding and achieve a sense of healing around Mental Health. Our Psychotherapy/counselling services is often tailored to the client's needs and goals for therapy, with a cultural perspective at hand as well as the open mindset to learn about each clients own cultural background. Our specialty at Muslim Social Services Waterloo Region is our counselling service. MSS provides professional and confidential counselling for clients of all backgrounds ensuring nobody is turned away. Our service is carried out by highly qualified trained therapists registered with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, providing expert assistance. We provide various forms of therapeutic approaches to clients from various backgrounds. Our therapeutic approaches include trauma-informed practice, family therapy, couples therapy, youth therapy, and talk therapy. We at MSS provide our service on a sliding scale cost model so that we ensure it is accessible for everyone, even providing counselling for free to those who cannot afford it.

“ I started having counselling sessions with Shiwan and he was the change maker of my life after being isolated for almost 9 years. ”

“ Reaching out for counselling through Muslim Social Services has been a profoundly positive experience. The support and understanding I've received have made a significant difference in my mental health, providing me with the tools and confidence to navigate life's challenges. ”

# MSSWR Programs

- Thrive Together Boys Program
- Building Bridges
- Employment Program
- English Program
- Computer Program
- Fresh Minds
- Healing through Art
- Mindful Gardening
- Neighbors Helping Neighbors
- CWSB with Police
- Tutoring Program
- Al-Nour Project





# Youth Programs

## Thrive Together Boys Program

- Hosts up to 10 participants each week
- Support the mental health and social wellbeing of young men through the power of sports.
- Ensure that every boy has the opportunity to thrive both on and off the field.



“ This program has given me a sense of peace every week. Life is a hassle but every Friday I feel the pressure off when I'm there and that's nice. ”



## Employment Program

- For ages 18-30
- Helps job become equipped with the proper skills to enter the workplace
- Through workshops, 45 program participants gain direction and confidence in their career goals

## Al-Nour Project

- Hosts up to 25 participants each week
- Providing women with resources, programs, and initiatives to take control of their lives
- Helps women develop confidence, resilience, hope, and optimism through important skills and techniques to empower them



“ Being a part of the Al-Nour Project has been incredibly empowering. I've gained so much confidence and learned valuable leadership skills, all while feeling supported by a strong community. This program has truly been a beacon of hope and inspiration in my life. ”

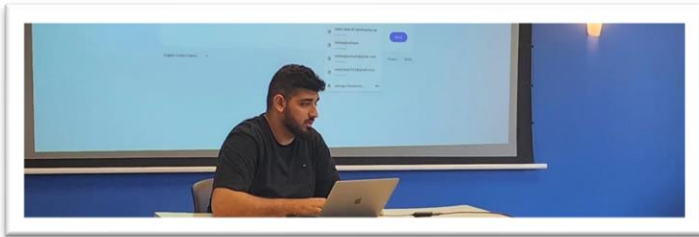
# Literacy Programs

## English Program

- Hosts up to 20 participants
- Brings together immigrants and refugees, giving them a safe, teacher-facilitated space to learn English
- Help participants to ameliorate their ability to navigate their environment, and improves their confidence and independence



“ As a refugee claimant, I need to pay to attend English circles. This organization helped me to improve my English and it is free. ”



“ I've gained valuable skills and confidence in using technology, which has opened up new opportunities in both my personal and professional life. ”

## Tutoring Program

- Collaboration between MSS, Camino, and Family Centre
- 20+ students each week from grades 3-12
- Students are taught English and Math by professional tutors
- Ran for over 25 sessions and 550 total hours this year



“ [The program] provided a safe place where I can positively relieve stress in terms of making sure I'm always doing well in my classes. ”

## Computer Program

- Empower individuals by enhancing their digital literacy skills
- Hosts around 15 participants
- Classes cover a range of topics, from basic computer operations and internet usage to more advanced software applications and coding

# Community Programs

## Building Bridges

- 30 participants from MSS and Forest Hill United Church
- Prepare meals, enjoy conversations, and increase connection and understanding between faith communities
- Contributes to increased connection, understanding, and mutual support in Waterloo Region



“ The continued partnership between MSS and Forest Hill United Church means participants are more comfortable around folks who are not like them, who have a different faith and culture ”



“ This program allows to expand my connections and improve my soft skills. Great program with great people. ”

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors

- Create a welcoming and supportive community for women
- Address feelings of isolation and foster diversity and integration
- Women from diverse backgrounds can connect, share experiences, and receive support



“ I was impressed with the police staff who did the presentations. They are friendly and open to questions and conversation. ”

## CSWB with Police

- Collaboration between MSS and the WRPS
- Hosted up to 25 participants
- Development of trust and understanding between community members and members of the police force.

# Mental Wellbeing Programs

## Healing Through Art

- Utilizes the connection between creativity and wellbeing to support participants
- Up to 40 participants each week
- Connect with participants in a safe space to express themselves through creative projects.
- Allows exploration of emotions in a supportive environment



“ Attending the Healing Through Art for Parents program at MSS has been a transformative experience. It's given me a safe space to express my emotions and connect with other parents, reminding me of the incredible healing power of art. ”



## Mindful Gardening

- Partnership between MSS and White Owl
- Healing and wellness by combating isolation and building community connections.
- Care for one another, practicing harmonious living with land.

## Fresh Minds

- Hosted up to 25 participants
- Enhance mental health and wellness through engaging outdoor activities and nature-based experiences
- Join guided nature walks, mindfulness exercises, and recreational activities that promote relaxation and mental clarity



“ The outdoor activities and nature walks have significantly reduced my stress levels and improved my overall mood. It's a fantastic way to reconnect with nature and nurture my mental health. ”



**Takhmina Shokirova** is a researcher, educator, and practitioner specializing in social justice and migration. She combines her interdisciplinary education in social work, peace studies, and human rights with professional experience in education and international/local NGOs. Since moving to Canada in 2012 to pursue a PhD in Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University, Takhmina has called the Waterloo region her home. Her research, teaching, and practice focus on gender equity, migrant workers, international students, and children and youth in migration and global contexts.



**Asu Negash** is a committed professional who is currently enrolled in the University of Waterloo's Bachelor of Arts Honors in Psychology program. Asu has a strong background in youth leadership, customer service, and educational support. She brings a wide range of skills and a wealth of experience to her roles. She has excellent organizational and analytical abilities. Asu has made noteworthy contributions in her roles as a summer camp leader at Muslim Social Services, a youth leader at Chandler Mowat Community Center, and a tutor at The Family Centre. Her dedication to community service and mental health advocacy is further demonstrated by her various volunteer positions, such as peer leader at the YMCA and member of the Muslim Youth Council, and her administrative experience at the KW Walk-In Clinic. Asu continues to push herself to the limit and leaves a positive mark on everything she does.



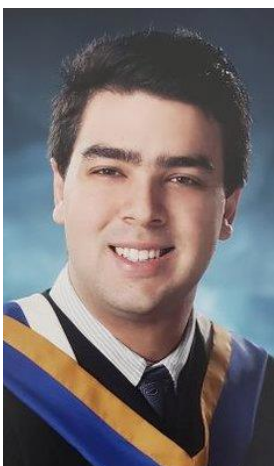
# New and Returning MSSWR Staff



**Razak Aziz** completed his Master of Social Work degree from the University of Windsor and also Undergraduate degree from the University of Manitoba. He is a registered Social Worker with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers. His clinical work starts with where people are in their life journey before moving together on the path to heal and grow. He uses a strengths perspective that helps build capacity, self-esteem and a growth mind-set. Over the last 20 years he has had and continues to have the privilege working with people in various social work settings. He currently works as a school Social Worker at the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board. His work and expertise at the school board largely is working with children and youth who are struggling with depression, coping skills, grief, and social media addictions using brief therapy. Razak looks forward to serving the community by building resiliency and optimism collaboratively to bring positive change and growth.



**Malik Javed Awan** is a highly qualified professional, holding a master's degree in psychology, specializing in counselling. He is genuinely passionate about engaging with diverse individuals and understanding their unique stories. Malik thrives on the opportunity to meet new people and provide them with the support they need. His journey began at the YMCA, where he initially embarked on his career path, immersing himself in the vibrant community and embracing the opportunity to make a difference. Malik's time at the YMCA served as a foundation for his commitment to fostering inclusivity and support within communities. Throughout his career, Malik has dedicated over 15 years to assisting immigrants in integrating into society and empowering them while working at Immigrant Services. Malik earned the trust and admiration of those he served through his genuine care and empathetic approach. His passion for meeting new people and his unwavering dedication to helping others have been a driving force in Malik's career.



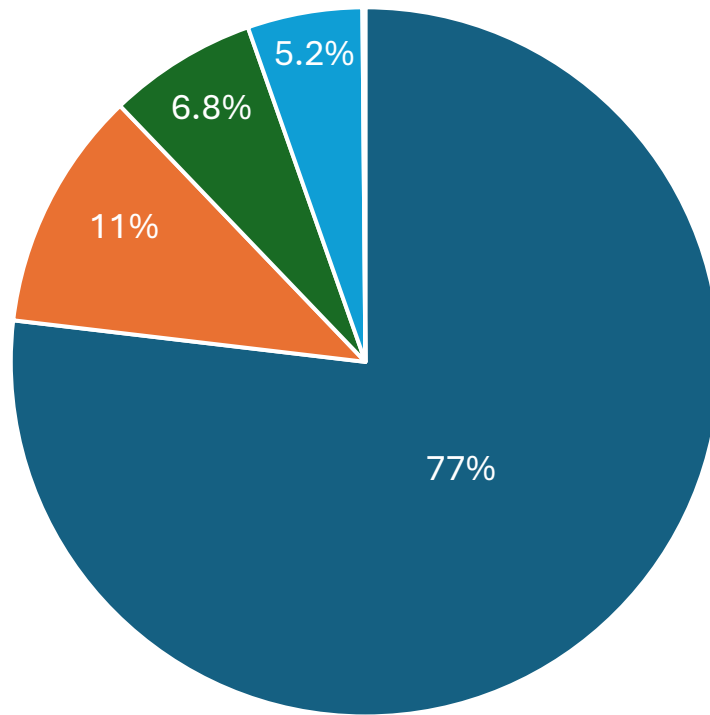
My name is **Shivan Ibrahim**, I am a registered psychotherapist (RP) with the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO). Most of my experience during my early practice comes from working with immigrants and refugee clients, strengthening my trauma approach in therapy. This also provided me with a stronger passion for this practice as it fell under why I chose to be a therapist, to be able to help people struggling with mental health concerns. Throughout my career as a therapist, I have strived to approach my clients through a respect-focused therapeutic approach. Through this lens, I allow the client to guide me in understanding their situation and approach our collaboration towards reaching their goals with a judgement-free lens. When discussing approaches with clients, I explain that I use informed/Based approaches that fall under CBT, DBT, ACT, trauma-informed, grief-informed therapy, Solution-focused therapy (SFBT), as well as Gottman-informed therapy. It's a passion of mine to provide support to clients in their therapeutic journeys.



	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	\$789,853	\$552,078
<b>Revenues</b>	<b>\$422,763</b>	<b>\$338,845</b>
Grants	\$324,982	\$282,608
Donations	\$46,378	\$14,710
Counselling Service	\$28,680	\$10,898
Social Assistance	\$22,155	\$30,559
Interest Income	\$568	\$70
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$259,129</b>	<b>\$203,861</b>
Salaries & Benefits	\$181,288	\$122,173
Program Costs	\$42,426	\$61,277
Legal & Professional Fees	\$19,631	\$3,400
Occupancy Costs	\$9,742	\$6,262
Office & General Expenses	\$2,072	\$2,505
Insurance	\$2,044	\$1,997
Bank Charges	\$996	\$2,006
Amortization	\$930	\$193

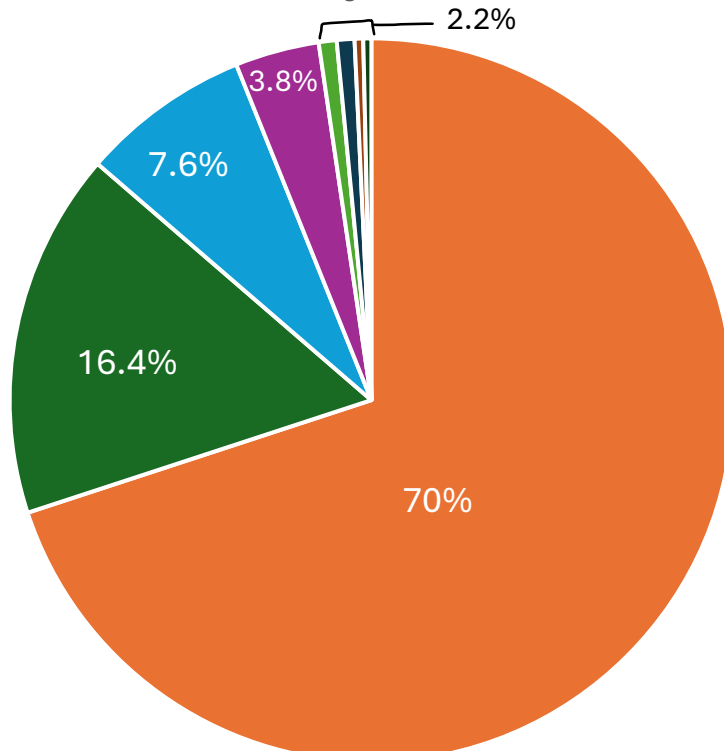
# Breakdown of Revenues 2023

■ Grants ■ Donations ■ Counselling ■ Social Assistance ■ Interest Income



# Breakdown of Expenses 2023

■ Breakdown of Expenses ■ Salaries and Benefits ■ Program Costs  
■ Legal and Professional Fees ■ Occupancy Costs ■ Office and General Expenses  
■ Insurance ■ Bank Charges ■ Amortization





# MSS In The Community





# Thank you to our Funders and Partners



Victim Services of Waterloo Region



Waterloo Region  
Suicide Prevention Council



ISLAMIC RELIEF CANADA



KIND MINDS FAMILY WELLNESS  
Culture + Research + Community Engagement



Ontario Trillium Foundation



IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP  
Settle. Work. Belong.



Region of Waterloo



FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF THE WATERLOO REGION



MAC  
Maple Grove School



Canadian Mental Health Association  
Waterloo Wellington



Waterloo Catholic District School Board  
Quality, Inclusive, Faith Based Education

Lutherwood  
Child and Family Foundation



CAPACITYCANADA



Imagine a Just Community

jack.org



CANADIAN WOMEN'S FOUNDATION



Waterloo Region  
Community Legal Services



SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT CENTRE OF WATERLOO REGION  
24 Hour Support Line 519.741.8633



CCMW



camino  
Wellbeing + Mental Health



CANADIAN RED CROSS



AFRO



SOMALI CANADIAN ASSOCIATION  
OF THE WATERLOO REGION



Women's Crisis Services  
OF WATERLOO REGION



Waterloo  
PUBLIC LIBRARY



KITCHENER



LYLE S. HALLMAN  
FOUNDATION



Coalition of Muslim Women  
Kitchener-Waterloo









The Working Centre

# Thank you for reading!

## Contact us

The Family Centre,  
65 Hanson Avenue,  
Kitchener, ON, N2C 2H6  
519-772-4399 ext. 2707  
info@muslimsocialserviceskw.org

## Follow us

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