

She Fixes SO many Problems

The Impact of the Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Worker Report Summary

Today, many newcomers are moving to Winnipeg. When they arrive, newcomers face many challenges. These challenges include:

- Learning about Canadian culture
- Finding jobs, schools, and training
- Learning healthcare, education and justice systems
- Getting to know Winnipeg and dealing with winter

These challenges can be even more difficult for newcomers who don't speak or read and write English, who are poor, or who come from war-torn countries.

To help newcomers, The Family Centre of Winnipeg hired Selam to be the Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Worker (NISW) for Tuxedo, River Heights and Fort Rouge. Her position is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Manitoba Immigration and Multiculturalism.

We talked to eight of Selam's clients to hear how she makes a difference in their lives, and to staff at The Family Centre about the changes they have seen in clients that Selam works with. Here is what they said.

When we meet in conversation circle, when we meet together, we talk about different culture and different countries, and we talk about everything about what's different between the Korean and Asian and Canada.

—Client

How Selam helps

Selam's offices are right in the community, and it is easy for clients to drop in to talk to her. She knows about all the resources and supports that are available to newcomers in Winnipeg.

Selam goes with clients to appointments to help them find their way around Winnipeg on foot or by public transit. She also connects clients to services or programs they need.

Selam helps clients find education, training and English classes. Selam also helps parents find childcare so that they can go to school or have a job.

Selam runs programs for her clients. One popular program is the Conversation Circle, where people practice English by talking about different topics. It is an opportunity to meet other people, to share culture and stories, and to learn about other resources and programs in Winnipeg. It is also a place to ask questions and discuss Canadian culture.

One of the most important services that Selam offers is helping clients find information. Selam helps clients read letters, fill out forms, make and go to appointments, find phone numbers and make phone calls.

I remember when I came to Canada, and Family Centre downtown, she helping to find me daycare, because I have many children and single-mother, and too much trouble for me that time. ... she coming, Selam, and she helping everything. Is why I'm confused and calling sometime and call Manitoba Housing, Selam will helping, she call. And she talk to, she fixes so many problems.

—Client

Staff at The Family Centre added that Selam often helps clients with crises. Legal issues, evictions and family violence are all more complicated to deal with when there are language, literacy and cultural barriers. This support makes a big difference for many clients.

Selam's impact

Selam helps clients to feel at home in Canada. She listens to clients, and helps them to solve their problems. Through Selam, they also meet other newcomers. This helps clients to feel less alone. Selam helps people make decisions for themselves and their families, and build self-confidence.

As Selam works with clients, their self-confidence grows and they learn to navigate Canadian systems and culture. They get to know other people, and build social networks. These networks provide social opportunities, but also a way to make changes in the community to support their children and families.

As well as helping clients, Selam helps other organizations to meet newcomer needs. She works with a network of organizations to provide services to newcomers. She explains newcomer needs and strengths to the organizations, and helps to mediate between the organization and the newcomer to make sure there are no misunderstandings. This helps everything run more smoothly for both the newcomer and the organization.

...the way I think, she brings the self-confidence more today now. Self-esteem. It makes it more easy with us to, when we meet Canadian, we talk more easy, easy way.

—Client

The impact that Selam has on her is that she always feel like she has somebody who listens to her. So if she has a problem, she can come to her, and she always finds a way. Even though, not immediately, but she will try to console her, talk to her, and probably they will laugh at something or some kind of stories, and then she will feel all better.

—Client (translated)

Conclusion

The clients expressed great appreciation for Selam's work. At the same time, they said that there is a need for "more of everything": more classes, more programs, a bigger centre, and more space for the programs and events. They also identified a number of specific programs that they would like to see.

Clients also talked about systemic issues that affect them. Three examples are that international credentials and experience are often not recognized by Canadian employers, how difficult it is to support a family on minimum wage or social assistance, and how difficult it is to access childcare. These issues affect how clients adapt to Canada.

It is clear from Selam's clients that Selam plays a very important role in many areas of life for newcomers. She works with organizations to help them provide services to newcomers, and with newcomers to make sure they are accessing the services they need. The invaluable services provided by Selam will continue to make Manitoba a welcoming home for newcomers.

I have a brother-in-law, family, here, but they don't know the things Selam does. I go to her.

—Client



CCPA

CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
MANITOBA OFFICE

The Family Centre
Where families come first!

This report was written by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba, in partnership with The Family Centre of Winnipeg. For a copy of the full report, please contact

The Family Centre of Winnipeg

401-393 Portage Ave. (Portage Place)

Winnipeg, MB R3B 3H6

204-947-1401

staff@familycentre.mb.ca

www.familycentre.mb.ca

CCPA-MB

309-323 Portage Ave.

Winnipeg, MB R3B 2C1

204-927-3200

ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

www.policyalternatives.ca