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She Fixes So Many Problems:

The Impact of the Neighbourhood
Immigrant Settlement Worker

By Sarah Cooper

APRIL
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Settlement Worker**

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Abstract

The Family Centre of Winnipeg's Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Worker provides services and supports to newcomers in the Tuxedo, River Heights and Fort Rouge neighbourhoods. This report explores her impact on the newcomer families and individuals she works with.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the newcomers who participated in the focus group and willingly shared their experiences and ideas to improve the NISW program. Thank you also to the interpreters who made sure that everyone was able to participate and contribute.

Research Team

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About the author

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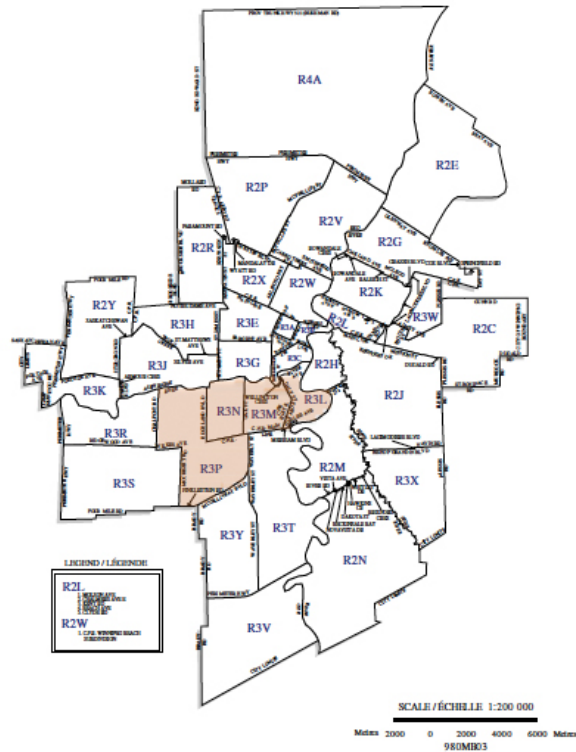
Introduction

Immigration to Winnipeg has been increasing over the last few years. Between 2000 and 2010, over 97,000 people moved to Manitoba from abroad, 15,809 in 2010 alone.ⁱ The Province’s goal is to have 20,000 immigrants moving to Manitoba each year by 2016.ⁱⁱ

Moving to a new country presents challenges, particularly if the language and culture are unfamiliar. Finding employment, securing daycare and schooling for children, navigating new social, health and justice systems, and adapting to Canadian culture and social norms are all difficult. For some newcomers these challenges may be complicated by additional barriers: lack of spoken English or English literacy, low levels of income, single parenthood, or past trauma, particularly for those from war-torn countries.

The Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Worker (NISW) is one of the programs established by the Province of Manitoba to help newcomers adjust to life in Canada. The program is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Manitoba Immigration and Multicultural-

FIGURE 1 The coloured area shows the catchment area of Winnipeg for Selam’s clients.



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ⁱ Province of Manitoba. 2011. *Manitoba Immigration Facts: 2010 Statistical Report*. Winnipeg, MB: Province of Manitoba.

ⁱⁱ Province of Manitoba. 2011. *Manitoba Immigration Facts: 2010 Statistical Report*. Winnipeg, MB: Province of Manitoba.

ism, and NISWs are hosted by community organizations. In this case, The Family Centre of Winnipeg is the host organization for Selam, the NISW who provides supports and assistance to newcomers in the Tuxedo, River Heights and Fort Rouge neighbourhoods. She plays an important role in supporting newcomers both as they first arrive, and once they have settled and begin to address more long-term goals.

Through conversations with staff at The Family Centre and a focus group with some of Selam's clients, this report examines Selam's role in supporting newcomer families and individuals, and her impact on her clients. It finds that, given the challenges of learning Canadian culture and systems, having a guide—someone who knows how to navigate this culture and systems—is central to many newcomers' successful adaptation and integration.

The Focus Group

The Family Centre of Winnipeg conducts regular evaluations of Selam's work to ensure that she is meeting annual goals. This report is not intended to duplicate these evaluations, but to add depth to The Family Centre's understanding of the impact that Selam has in her role as the NISW by hearing directly from newcomers.

To do this, we organised a focus group for a few of Selam's clients. Participants gathered together for about an hour to talk about the role of the NISW and the supports she offers to them. The focus group was held at the Tuxedo Family Resource Centre, as this is a space that is familiar to most of Selam's clients. Staff provided snacks and a welcoming environment for the focus group.

Eight clients participated in the focus group. All the participants were women. Three participants are refugees; five are immigrants. They speak a number of different languages, and came from a variety of countries: Iran, Iraq, D.R. Congo, South Korea, Egypt, Somalia, and Ethiopia. Almost all have children, though of different ages.

Four interpreters were available to provide translations as needed. Childminders took care of the children, so that parents could participate

more easily. Participants received an honorarium to acknowledge their time and contribution, and signed a consent form to indicate that they agreed to participate in the focus group (see Appendix A). CCPA-MB staff facilitated the discussion and took notes. The discussion was also recorded.

The discussion focused around open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The questions asked about the challenges that newcomers face in coming to Canada; the kinds of issues Selam helps with; the programs Selam runs; how working with Selam affects participants as individuals and as families; and how to improve the NISW program. The questions were developed in collaboration with The Family Centre, Manitoba Immigration and Multiculturalism and Selam to make sure that they would capture the scope of Selam's work and be relevant and appropriate for the participants.

Although the focus group participants were very forthcoming and open in the discussion, and despite the presence of interpreters, language was still a barrier. It can be difficult to share in-depth ideas and feelings through an interpreter or in a new language. Participants may also have not wanted to share personal stories or concerns in such a public venue.

Selam and other staff at The Family Centre added context and additional details to the study, based on their knowledge and experience of the program and its clients. In addition to the infor-

mation shared through the focus group, year-end reports and other internal documents were reviewed to provide background and additional details to Selam's work.

The Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Worker Program

Selam brings particular skills and experience that enrich her work as an NISW. She speaks five languages, and so can speak with clients from numerous countries in their own language. She was born in a Muslim country, so is familiar with Arab and Muslim cultural norms, and has lived in numerous countries, giving her the lived experience of being a newcomer.

There is no such thing as a typical day for Selam. She works with clients who have many diverse needs, and her offices are located directly in the community, one in Tuxedo and one in Fort Rouge. The Tuxedo office is located directly in the public housing complex where many of her clients live. This means that Selam is accessible to her clients and that they will often drop by to say hello or to ask a question.

When she meets a new family, Selam begins with a needs assessment to determine what the family's immediate and long-term goals and priorities are. This enables her to determine what resources the family will need, and where they can access these. Clients who have previous negative experiences with Canadian systems may not trust Selam or believe that the NISW will be able to help her. Selam encourages the client to join programs, often cajoling her to attend just one session to try it out.

As she builds a relationship with the client, Selam provides information, accompanies families to appointments, advocates on behalf of the families, and helps them to build the skills needed to be able to access services and supports by themselves. Each family is different, but with The Family Centre and other partner organizations, Selam finds and develops new programs and resources to address their priorities. The needs assessment is updated as the family's goals are achieved or their priorities change.

To address the challenges faced by newcomers, Selam builds partnerships with other organizations and agencies. She works with networks such as the Tuxedo Family Resource Centre Steering Committee, which brings resources and community supports together to support the Tuxedo Manitoba Housing complex. Selam refers clients to programs offered through these and other organizations, and through these partnerships Selam ensures that her clients have access to the best and most appropriate programs available.

Selam's clients come from a variety of different countries. The six most common source countries for her clients are Iraq, Korea, Eritrea, Somalia, Afghanistan, and the Philippines; the six most common languages spoken by her cli-

ents are Arabic, Korean, Tigrinya, Somali, Persian and Tagalog. At first, most of Selam's clients were larger refugee families from Africa; over time, this has shifted and today a much larger percentage of her clients are smaller families or individuals from Asia who came through the provincial nominee program.

To give an idea of the scale of Selam's work, in 2011-12, Selam worked with 74 families (including 118 adults), of whom 32 were new and 42 were returning clients. Sixty-nine percent of

her clients were refugees, and 31 percent were economic immigrants. Most of her clients are women, although men will often ask their wives to ask Selam questions. Over the year, she made 59 home visits and 358 referrals to other programs and services, with a total of 7817 client contacts. She also organized 21 events (74 sessions in total) for her clients, which included English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes, conversation circles, citizenship classes, a teen group, field trips, and seasonal events.

The View From the Clients

Selam provides a variety of services and supports for the individuals and families she works with. She usually begins with a needs assessment, identifying the main issues and priorities for the family, and then works with them to identify strategies and referrals that will meet these needs. Clients expressed a number of different ways in which Selam helps them to navigate the challenges they experience.

When newcomers first arrive, they face a number of challenges. Focus group participants said that, when they first arrived in Canada, the first challenges they experienced were:

- weather: getting used to the winter cold and snow
- the city: finding their way around and where things are
- language: learning English
- culture: understanding Canadian culture and cultural expectations
- education: learning English, literacy, and the education system is difficult, especially for those with no prior formal education
- the health system: understanding the new system, and finding a doctor (ideally who speaks the same language)

Once settled, newcomers face new challenges. These include:

- finding a job: often qualifications, certificates, and experience from their home country are not recognized here in Canada
- accessing childcare: there is no childcare in the area. Without childcare, single parents and primary caregivers cannot work or go to school full time
- language: learning English continues to be a challenge. It is hard to get by, to do anything, without English, and sometimes translators make mistakes

Participants listed many things that Selam helps them with. At first, most just said that Selam helps with everything; anything that they are unsure about, they call Selam and she helps them to fix it:

We ask her and she does as far as possible... almost everything what I need is done through Selam.

With more questions, however, a number of key areas that Selam helps with emerged.

Getting around

Especially when newcomers first arrive, navigating the city can be a challenge. Selam goes with

Box 1: Conversation circles

The most popular program that Selam offers is the conversation circle. It is open to everyone, although the majority of participants are newcomers. It is an opportunity to practice English and to ask questions about Canadian culture, as well as to learn about programs and resources that are available for newcomers. For the first part of the circle, participants are welcome to ask questions on any topic, and then they share their ideas, solutions and experiences. During the second part, Selam recommends resources and programs that are available throughout the city that she thinks participants would be interested in.

clients to help them find their way on foot or by public transit. On a practical level, Selam helps people with everyday tasks, such as shopping. She also acts as a bridge to services, translating when needed and providing support to build self-confidence and self-reliance.

[Selam has] helped her kids find jobs, look at different schools, take them different places in the city, phone numbers, government numbers. (translated)

Accessing jobs, education and daycare

Accessing jobs and education are two challenges that participants identified as both important and difficult. Selam helps to connect individuals to jobs, and to understand the process for applying for jobs here in Canada. She has also provided support for youth to find jobs.

Selam also helps adults find English programs that are appropriate for their level and needs. Participants talked about English classes, and education more broadly, as a priority for themselves. For some, a class with more supports may be needed:

Because she was not educated in her country, so education here is very difficult for her, to learn the language. (translated)

Lack of daycare is a barrier for many parents with young children who may want to attend school or get a job:

I don't find there is daycare. I went to school but part-time, but I want full-time, but I couldn't because there is no daycare.

One participant said that Selam found an English class with a daycare to take care of her young children. Selam has also helped find schools for children. One participant noted that as she can't drive, Selam helped her to find a schoolbus to take her children to school.

Building community

Participants talked a lot about the programs that Selam offers. She runs a variety of different programs, and most of them bring people together. Examples mentioned by participants include the English conversation circles (see Box 1), potluck, and yoga or exercise classes. These are a good opportunity to practice English, to meet other people, to share cultures and experiences and to do something different.

Selam also connects people to the Tuxedo Family Resource Centre, which offers many programs that people can participate in and connect with the broader community. These programs offer the benefits that they are designed for (e.g. practicing English, exercise) but also are a way to do something different and to meet others.

Understanding Canadian culture

Participants identified learning about Canadian culture and systems as a major challenge when arriving in Canada. Often there are significant differences between how things are done in Canada and in other countries; often these differences are subtle and not necessarily obvious at first glance. Selam creates a space for discus-

sions about cultural differences through the conversation circles that she organizes.

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.

When clients face conflicts or misunderstandings, she is available to answer questions and help negotiate the complexities of cultural differences. Selam also supports newcomer young adults and youth who may experience conflicts with their parents as they adapt to Canada.ⁱⁱⁱ

Navigating systems

Possibly the most important support provided by Selam that participants mentioned is finding information. It can be difficult to find out who to ask or where to go to find the information needed to solve a problem or address a need. Language can be a barrier to asking a question or understanding the response. When systems are unfamiliar, it can be difficult to know what question to ask.

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. ... That time, is Family Centre, three years, to someone is coming every week one time, and after that Family Centre is, 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.

Selam helps newcomers navigate through systems, translating documents and advocating on newcomers' behalf to ensure that they can manage their own affairs and access the services they need. Selam translates letters and docu-

ments and helps to fill out forms, both of which can be daunting especially for newcomers who are not literate in English.

There are other organizations that provide support to newcomers as well. Participants in the focus group identified Child and Family Services and Welcome Place as two important supports; they also mentioned programs that they have attended in other parts of the city. However, it was clear throughout the discussion that the one-to-one relationship with Selam and the supports she provides and can direct them to are an important part of each participant's experience.

Selam's impact

Participants said that working with Selam makes a "big difference" in their lives. She has extensive knowledge of the resources and supports that are available to newcomers, and will search for information when she doesn't know something. She is able to navigate Canadian systems, smoothing the way for newcomers. One participant said:

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

Participants said that having someone right in the community is important: Selam's office location at the Tuxedo Family Resource Centre means she is accessible and close by.

Participants also talked about the emotional supports that Selam provides. Selam's knowledge of resources, her holistic approach, and the relationships that Selam builds with her clients mean that they feel that their needs are being heard and met:

She helps us in filling forms, she understands us very quickly, she understands our problems, that's what's special about Selam.

Moving to a new country can be an isolating experience. One woman said that with Selam, she always feels like she has someone to listen to her:

ⁱⁱⁱ Unfortunately, talking with the young adults and youth about Selam was outside the scope of this research..

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. (translated)

Another said that Selam “becomes family to them.”

Not only does Selam herself provide emotional supports, she also helps to connect people to community, in part through the programs she runs (as noted above) and also by introducing people. One woman said Selam helped her to find people from her own culture, so that she could speak with others who share her language and life experience.

These supports help build self-confidence and self-esteem, and enable people to make decisions about themselves and their families as they learn to navigate Canadian culture and systems.

...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.

Overall, the supports that Selam provides make it easier for newcomers to adapt to Canada. This point was underlined by one participant and one interpreter, both of whom had been in Canada for more than five years. They said that when they arrived, there were few supports, if any, for newcomers, and that they struggled to find their way around; the supports that have been added over the last few years, including the NISWs, have made it much better for newcomers.

The View From the Staff

As noted above, during the focus group, language was a barrier in addressing questions about Selam's role in depth. Staff spoke about the complexities of the work that Selam does and how integral her role is in helping newcomers to not only meet their needs but also to integrate into Canadian culture and society.

For example, although some of the challenges that families face are very practical (e.g. finding daycare or EAL classes, understanding Canadian accents), others are more subtle and require more complex supports and solutions (see Box 2 for an example). Some concerns that arise frequently are:

- Crises that are magnified by language, literacy, and cultural barriers:
 - Legal issues, evictions, family violence and other urgent issues all are dealt with in particular ways here in Canada and all come with extensive written materials and deadlines that must be met. They are very stressful for any household, and are especially so for those with additional barriers or lacking the resources to address the crisis.
- Women, men and families who need

support as they learn about human rights in Canada:

-Family violence happens often, especially when family members are stressed.

Women learn that there are supports available to protect them; men must learn to share power and respect women's rights. This conflict can be challenging for all members of the household.

- Mothers whose needs have been ignored:
 - A husband may learn English and get a job, while the mother stays home with the children. When all the children are in school, she may find herself isolated and not confident in English, yet facing pressure to find a job.

Selam works with clients to address the practical aspects of these issues such as paperwork, timelines, and other requirements and encourages clients to take her business card with them and call her—or have the agency staff call—if they are unclear about what is being discussed. She also helps to clarify social or cultural ideas, such as how to understand and address learning disabilities in children or what a family member's options are in cases of family violence, and

Box 2: The complexities of providing support

Selam had a client, a single mother with five children aged 6 to 16, who came to her with a crisis. Last summer, Manitoba Housing had told her that she had to pay \$200 for damages to her unit or she would be evicted. Working with the Residential Tenancies Branch, they established a payment plan, to which the client agreed.

However, the client didn't follow through on the payment plan, and in January she received an eviction notice from the Residential Tenancies Branch. She brought the notice to Selam, and asked her to help. Selam called Manitoba Housing, but the staff said there was nothing they could do; there were other factors at play that they could not discuss for reasons of confidentiality, and the client would be evicted.

Selam called the client's supports together: workers from Child and Family Services, Employment and Income Assistance, New Journey Housing, New Directions, and the local church. They discussed how best to support the client in this situation, and agreed that although the client had made many mistakes, and Manitoba Housing may have reasons for its decision, it is unjust to evict a woman with five children in the middle of the winter in Winnipeg. The agencies recognized the need to work together with the client to solve the problem.

After contacting Manitoba Housing, but receiving the same negative response, the support workers wrote a letter to the Minister of Housing and Community Development at the Province. A few days later they received the response that the client would not be evicted.

works with women to make sure that they are accessing the programs and resources they need to support themselves, not just their families.

A key aspect of Selam's work lies in identifying gaps in the services her clients are receiving, connecting them to programs to fill these gaps, and developing programs as needed. For example, Selam heard from teenaged newcomers that they were experiencing conflicts with their parents about dating, curfews, styles of dress and communication. She established Girls' Groups at Kelvin and Grant Park high schools for newcomer girls, where girls meet at lunch to discuss these issues and find solutions.

Establishing networks

As the host organization for the NISW, The Family Centre of Winnipeg plays a unique role in supporting Selam and her clients. The Family Centre is a multi-service agency with a broad spectrum of programs, including counselling, parenting and in-home supports, and training. Many of these programs are very relevant for many newcomer families; hosting Selam enables The Family Centre to reach out and offer its

services to a new audience and new area of the city. The Family Centre has offered training for Early Childhood Education Workers, and also offers employment opportunities as childminders, support workers, community workers and summer students.

Selam also spends a large amount of time developing partnerships and networks with other organizations. Beginning with the Steering Committees that support the family resource centres operated by The Family Centre of Winnipeg, Selam works with organizations to find opportunities to help newcomers and to support the organizations in providing services to newcomers. These networks ensure that Selam is connected to different parts of the community and continues to build her knowledge of the resources available through various channels. It also means that she is able to help her clients integrate into existing programs and organizations.

The partnerships range from large organizations such as the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, to local church and community organizations. Larger organizations provide grants and offer programs, while churches and commu-

Box 3: Connecting with the school

Education is very important for newcomer families, but for many, adapting to the Canadian system is a challenge. For parents who don't speak English, who are not literate in English, or who may not have attended school themselves, learning the school system is an ongoing process.

Communication is often the biggest challenge faced by parents and schools. Language and cultural barriers block understanding of why parents or schools are acting in a particular way. Parents often save forms to show Selam, but by then they might be overdue; schools may have trouble getting in touch with parents to address the child's needs.

These challenges are magnified for students with learning or other disabilities. The school can often get grants to support children with disabilities, but require parental consent and involvement. Selam helps by explaining the process and, often, clarifying what a disability is and how the supports can help. She can also help by filling out forms and accessing grants for the children for summer programs.

Selam mediates between the school and the family, and both can contact her with questions or if an urgent matter arises. Her role is important to both sides: parents appreciate her assistance navigating the school system, while schools are better able to support the students with help from Selam.

nity organizations provide rent-free space and volunteers for programs and gatherings. These networks open a huge range of program opportunities for newcomers, including counselling, EAL classes and one-on-one English practice led by volunteers, literacy and training programs, exercise, community-building and parenting supports, donations to the clothing depot hosted at the family resource centre, and supports for housing, income and education. Some clients have completed training for food-handling certificates, and are now hired by the WRHA for lunch events. All of these opportunities have ripple effect throughout the community as people see opportunities for themselves, their families and the broader community.

Selam also supports the partner organizations as they adapt to meet the needs of newcomers. She helps the organizations to develop and modify programs for newcomers, as well as to understand the unique context of the newcomers and the contributions they bring as they adapt to Canada. She also acts as a liaison between the organization and the client, ensuring that both are aware of the other's requirements and issues (see Box 3). This role is very beneficial for the or-

ganizations, particularly those that are not specifically geared towards newcomer clients (e.g. Employment and Income Assistance, Child and Family Services), as Selam is able to mediate between the two. This makes everything run more smoothly: if everyone knows what's happening, then it's easier to get the work done.

Changes in clients

As her relationships with clients grow, the staff noticed subtle, yet important changes in Selam's clients. As they work with Selam, they learn how to navigate Canadian systems and become empowered to deal with their problems, whether taking the bus somewhere new or calling Manitoba Housing with a question or concern. As their confidence and ability grows, they gradually take ownership of their problems and the solutions, and eventually they can do it themselves (see Box 4).

Her approach is empowering: rather than telling clients what they should or should not do, Selam provides clients with information and options about the resources and supports that are available, and helps them to strategize about the best choices for themselves and their families.

Box 4: A success story

One of Selam's clients is a woman who has been in Winnipeg for 12 years, but had never been on a bus. Three years ago, she wanted a job, but didn't want to leave her neighbourhood. However, the programs to help people find jobs are downtown, and best accessed by bus. She was scared to go downtown on the bus, so Selam went with her.

The first trip was about the baby steps required to build self-confidence and skills. Selam walked her through how to pay her fare, how to use the bus, how to ring the bell. Although afraid at first, the client was excited to learn all of this and realize she could do it by herself too. She was talking about it for two weeks afterwards. She completed her résumé, and today she works at a daycare.

Even with difficult clients, Selam is respectful of their needs and priorities, and establishes boundaries and relationships using humour and care.

Selam also helps to connect clients to the informal networks that exist in any community: information about where to find jobs, training, or programs for children. As clients connect with Selam and with each other, they establish social networks for themselves, and are able to advocate for themselves and their communities. For example, the Carpathia Boys and Girls Club, the Sport Programs in Inner-city Neighbourhoods and other recent programs for youth

in Tuxedo were driven in large part by newcomers who saw a need for after-school activities for their children.

These social networks also provide social engagement opportunities for newcomers. When people meet in the resource centre or through a program, they learn that they are not alone in the challenges they are facing, and that others are experiencing or have experienced similar challenges. They can hear about what strategies others have used, and be reassured that others have succeeded, as well as develop supports and friendship.

Improvements to the NISW Program

Overall, the focus group participants recognized the limitations of what Selam can offer, as she is only one person, with limited time and funding. They did, however, identify a need for “more of everything”: more classes, more programs, a bigger centre, and more space for the programs and events.

More specifically, participants identified a number of different programs that they would like Selam to offer. It would be impossible for Selam to offer all of these programs herself, but perhaps she could locate other agencies offering these types of programs. Alternatively, The Family Centre of Winnipeg could develop, or advocate for other service agencies to develop, these types of programs. These programs included:

- Citizenship class
 - This was offered in previous years, and people would like to see it again.
- Driver’s education classes
 - If participants had cars, they could get around more easily with their children.
- Programs for children and youth
 - Afterschool programs for younger children where they can run and get some exercise
 - Job programs for youth

- Employment programs
 - More assistance with finding jobs, and with training for jobs.
 - English classes for job training (e.g. an upgrading certificate)
- Other programs/supports
 - Computer training and access
 - Exercise programs
 - One-on-one conversation to work on pronunciation
 - Sewing programs and access to sewing machines at the resource centre
 - An easy way to find phone numbers
 - More information about programs available nearby and in other parts of the city, so that people can attend these programs or that the programs can be offered in Tuxedo.

Participants in the focus group also identified systemic issues that frame their experience in adjusting to Canada. In particular, they mentioned the difficulties many newcomers face in having international credentials and work experience recognized in Canada, and the difficulties of supporting oneself and one’s family on minimum wage or social assistance rates. Although

these issues are outside the scope of work for Selam, they are important to mention because they affect newcomers' ability to adapt and integrate to Canadian society, and affect many of the other areas in which Selam provides support.

Access to childcare was also mentioned as an ongoing concern, both by participants and by staff. Both full-time and part-time daycare and childminding are required to enable parents and caregivers to attend school and English programs, and to give parents and caregivers a break and allow them to participate in recreational and social programs. Given the ongoing and increasing influx of newcomers to Manitoba, childcare policy should be coordinated with immigration policy, and the numbers of available childcare spaces increased accordingly.

When asked specifically about Selam's role as the NISW, and how this role and the supports it provides could be improved, participants didn't have any improvements to suggest. They did, however, affirm her work in many ways.

Focus group participants said that that everything is "so confusing" but Selam "understands our problems" and the programs and resource centres are helpful. One person said that "she helps everyone in the area, and speaks so many languages". Another said "whenever there is something we need, we ask, and we get". A third said that "she calls, fixes so many problems", and overall participants said that Selam is a "nice person", and that they appreciate the support and care with which she does her job.

Staff also talked about the need for more funding, to be able to offer more programs and programs specifically tailored to the needs of newcomers. Related to this is the need for more space; although the partnership with the family resource centre benefits both newcomers and established Canadians, at times there have been tensions because of perceptions that the centre is just for newcomers. Having a variety of spaces would help to ease these tensions.

Conclusion

It is clear from the focus group that Selam provides invaluable support in almost every area of life for newcomers. Selam's role is to build mutually beneficial relationships, ensuring that both clients and organizations are benefiting from their respective perspectives. In this way, her work is much greater than the sum of its parts; she facilitates networks and connections by acting as a mediator, bridging service agencies and newcomer families and individuals faced with new and unfamiliar systems and cultures.

Especially for those with multiple barriers (e.g. lack of spoken English, English literacy, educational experience, recognition of international credentials and experience; being a single parent; having low income due to insufficient social assistance rates or minimum wage), Selam helps to access and navigate Canadian systems. She helps them with practical issues, such as finding EAL programs or daycare, and with less tangible emotional supports, easing the transition to Canada.

However, it's also important to note that a growing proportion of Selam's clients are economic migrants, drawn to Manitoba through the provincial nominee program. That these immigrants are also finding the supports of an NISW

helpful demonstrates the importance of these types of resources as newcomers work through the period of adjustment to Canada.

The neighbourhood base of the NISW is important: from her two offices in the community, Selam is accessible and close-at-hand. She is able to build relationships not only with clients in the neighbourhood, but also with organizations and community groups, grounding her work in the context experienced by her clients. The recently-established network of NISWs also serves to support Selam and other NISWs in locating resources and strategizing the best ways to meet client needs.

The support of The Family Centre and the program funders is essential to this program, and is greatly appreciated by the clients and the staff alike. In order to continue to ensure that newcomers are supported as they adjust to life in Canada, The Family Centre of Winnipeg should continue to offer the services of an NISW. If possible, it should expand the services offered by the NISW or hire additional NISWs, as the extent of the work done by Selam is remarkable, and there are additional programs and supports that could be provided. In addition, although outside the scope of this study,

it is likely that there are additional newcomers who are not receiving the services offered by an NISW but who would like to. The invaluable services provided by Selam and other NISWs will continue to make Manitoba a welcoming home for newcomers.

Appendix A—Consent Form

This is the consent form which focus group participants were asked to sign.

Discussion on Supports for Newcomers

You are invited to participate in a discussion about supports for newcomers to Canada and the role of the Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Worker. The discussion will be hosted by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba and The Family Centre of Winnipeg.

The discussion will take about 2 hours. It will be recorded.

This is an opportunity to share your ideas and experiences about what kind of supports newcomers need. This will help The Family Centre improve its programs and resources.

The information from the discussion will be used to write a report. The report will be shared with The Family Centre of Winnipeg and will be posted on the CCPA-MB's website (www.policyalternatives.ca). It may also be used for other reports or presentations.

Rights and Confidentiality

Your name or identity will not be used in the report. Information is shared without your permission only if a person's safety is threatened or when required by law.

Participating in the discussion will not affect your relationship with The Family Centre or the Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Worker.

You don't have to answer a question if you don't want to, and you can stop participating in the discussion at any time.

If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw the information you have shared before the final report is released.

Only CCPA-MB staff will have access to the recording and transcripts which will be stored in locked filing cabinets or on password-protected computers at the CCPA offices.

The recording and transcripts will be kept for two years after the release of the final report (until December 2015) and will be deleted then.

Questions

If you have any questions about the research project please contact:

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Do you agree to participate in the discussion?

_____ I agree to participate in the discussion, including being recorded.

_____ I have received of a copy of this consent form.

_____ I would like to receive a copy of the final report.

(If you would like a copy of the final report, please provide a mailing address:

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Immigrant Refugee

Country of origin: _____ Language: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Sarah Cooper

Appendix B—Focus Group Questions

Introductions

- What is your name and country of origin, and how long have you been in Canada?

Context

- What are things that newcomers to Canada need help with?
- What is difficult when you move to Canada
 - Right away?
 - After a few months or years?

Role of the NISW

- How did you hear about Selam? How did you meet?
- What kinds of things does Selam help you or your family with? In what way does she help you?
 - Examples:
 - School (children and adults)
 - EA
 - Money
 - EIA
 - Legal issues
 - Housing
 - Basic needs
 - Childcare
 - Jobs
 - Canadian culture
 - Health
 - Support with worries
 - Intergenerational challenges
 - Anything else?
- Do you attend the programs that Selam runs? Which ones? How do these programs help you and your family?
 - Examples:
 - English conversation circles
 - Parenting programs
 - Citizenship classes
 - Are there other programs that you would like to see offered?
- Do you also get support or help from other places? Where?

Impact

- What is most helpful or important about Selam's role?
- How does working with Selam affect your family? How does it affect you?
 - Building relationships with established Canadians
 - Building independence and self-confidence

Wrapping up

- Are there other tasks or problems that Selam could help with?
- Are there other things that someone else could help with?
- How can we make the Settlement Worker program better?