

Supporting the Settlement and Integration of French-speaking Immigrants and Refugees Outside Quebec

French-speaking immigrants contribute to Canada's strength and prosperity, cultural and linguistic diversity as well as socio-economic development. However, the pathway of the French-speaking immigrant is not without challenges. This info sheet reviews common settlement and integration barriers and presents services available for Francophone newcomers.

The Francophone Community

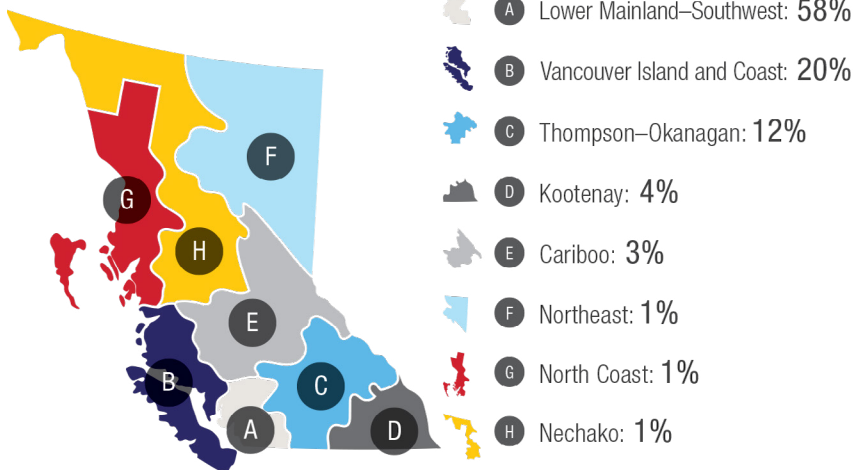
A CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITY

Francophone immigration plays a role in maintaining the vitality of Francophone communities and helps sustain Canada as a bilingual country. British Columbia with the fourth largest Francophone community in Canada has a dynamic, unique, multicultural, and vibrant Francophone community. Francophones account for 1.7% of the population and are found in every part of the province¹. Furthermore, of all the provinces outside Quebec, British Columbia has the largest percentage of immigrants within its French-speaking population².

WHERE DO FRANCOPHONES LIVE?

(percentage of the population whose first official language is French)

ECONOMIC REGIONS



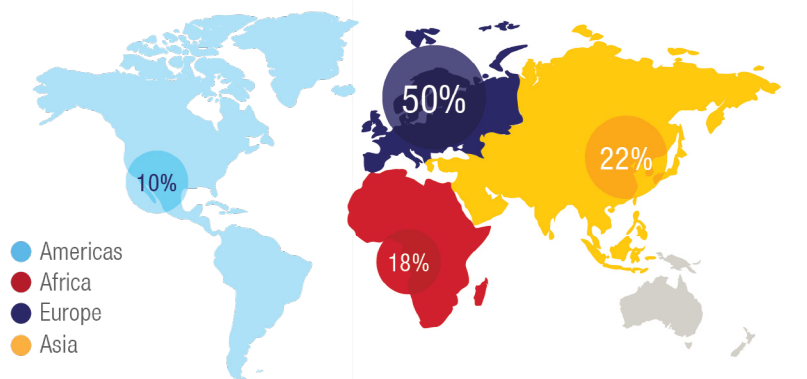
The French Presence in British Columbia³

¹ Fédération des communautés Francophones et acadienne (FCFA) du Canada. "Francophone Community Profile of British Columbia" Available at https://www.fcb.ca/telecharger/brochures_d'information/Francophonie_British_Columbia_2009_EN.pdf

² Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. "Infographic: French-speaking immigrants outside Quebec". 2011. Available at <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/statistics/infographics/french-speaking-immigrants-outside-quebec>

³ Office of the Commissioner of Official Language. "Infographic: The French Presence in British Columbia". Available at <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/statistics/infographics/french-presence-british-columbia>

WHERE WERE FRENCH-SPEAKING IMMIGRANTS BORN?



The French Presence in British Columbia⁴

A FRENCH-SPEAKING IMMIGRANT IS:

“An immigrant for whom French is the first Canadian official language of usage. This includes permanent residents who declare knowledge of ‘French only’ as their official language or those who declare knowledge of ‘French and English’ as their official languages, as well as those who declare French as the language that they are the most at ease to use⁵.”

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

The Importance of Referrals

ACCESSING SERVICES IN FRENCH

A 2020 study on French-speaking immigrants’ occupational engagement in Francophone community sites in Metro Vancouver revealed that Francophone spaces “are useful for providing information and opportunities for volunteering, creating ways to get involved, meeting new people, gaining new experiences, and developing a sense of belonging⁶.” However, as with any minority community, the pathway of the French-speaking immigrant in terms of reception and settlement, recruitment and career development, and socio-economic integration, is not without challenges.

Some of the most common challenges experienced by French-speaking newcomers include:

- newcomers’ unfamiliarity with services available in French or the presence of Francophone communities and institutions⁷;
- the lack of knowledge of Francophone Minority Communities (FMCs) and their services;
- and the absence of a standardized referral process from mainstream service providers to service providers in FMCs⁸.

⁴ Office of the Commissioner of Official Language. “Infographic: The French Presence in British Columbia”. Available at <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/statistics/infographics/french-presence-british-columbia>

⁵ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (IRCC). “Meeting Our Objectives: Francophone Immigration Strategy”. 2019. Available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/francophone-immigration-strategy.html>

⁶ Anne-Cécile Delaisse. “The spatiality of Occupation in a Migration Context: Exploring French-speaking Immigrants’ Occupational Engagement in Francophone community sites in Metro Vancouver”. 2020. Available at <https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0392355>

⁷ Commissioner of Official Language. “Time To Act For The Future Of Francophone Communities: Redressing The Immigration Imbalance”. November 2014. Available at https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/sites/default/files/report_on_immigration.pdf

⁸ RIF-SK. “Francophone Integration Pathway: A Top Priority”. Available at <https://www.rif-sk.ca/uploads/media/5bb4e06775cdc/le-parcours-d-integration-francophone-en-copie.pdf>

Strengthening the Francophone Referral Process

As part of the Government of Canada's commitment to enhancing the vitality of Francophone Minority Communities (FMCs) and supporting linguistic duality and the principle of substantive equality in service delivery, several key initiatives promote the successful integration of French-speaking newcomers and foster strong ties between newcomers and Francophone communities. IRCC's Francophone Integration Pathway aims to ensure that French-speaking newcomers can obtain accurate and complete information on French settlement services offered by Francophone organizations. IRCC aims also to ensure that French-speaking newcomers can be referred to Francophone service providers whilst also emphasizing a "par et pour" approach (by and for Francophones). This principle requires the active involvement of Francophone communities in the development and implementation of policies, programs, and projects tailored to the specific needs of French-speaking communities and newcomers.

Therefore, the successful integration of Francophone newcomers requires collaborative partnerships among Francophone and non-Francophone organizations across the province including Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), settlement and integration services providers, as well as mainstream organizations.

Partnerships with Francophone organizations provide the opportunity to:

- support IRCC's objectives of informing all newcomers of the existence of Francophone minority communities and the possibility of settling in French in Canada;
- meet and fulfill their responsibilities under IRCC's contribution agreements, which require SPOs to confirm with all clients their official language of preference (1), inform them about the availability of French settlement services and the possibility of settling in French (2), refer their Francophone clients to French services (3) and develop and maintain partnerships with Francophone service providers offering settlement services (4);
- foster strong ties between Francophone and non-Francophone service providers. Non-Francophone recipients must factor in the expertise of Francophone communities in the design of a project, program or partnership involving services in French. It is important for Francophone organizations to be actively involved in the sharing of ideas from design through implementation in order to create inclusive partnerships and joint projects⁹.

Finally, since the French language is spoken across five continents, service providers offering settlement and integration services cannot rely on the country of origin of newcomers or their accents to identify a French speaker. To ensure that Francophone clients receive services in French, service providers should instead ask their clientele whether they wish to be served in French.

⁹ For more information, please refer to the IRCC document "Guidance on Implementing the Francophone Integration Pathway". Available in ICARE resources.

Access to Services in French Across British Columbia

With many services in French available to Francophones living in the province, French-speaking immigrants and refugees can study, work, and access social services in French.

SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION RESOURCES IN FRENCH

College Educacentre – provides Settlement services, information, orientation, integration, and employment services for immigrants (permanent residents and refugees).

educacentre.com

Le Relais Francophone – provides settlement, integration, and employment services to immigrants, naturalized citizens and temporary residents.

vivreenbc.ca

Le Réseau en immigration Francophone de la Colombie Britannique (RIFCB) – Francophone Immigration Networks, IRCC-funded multi-stakeholder immigration partnerships, help and assist services providers who have enquiries about referrals.

rifcb.ca

Services TÉFIÉ – Travailleuses et travailleurs en établissement des familles immigrantes dans les écoles (Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, CSF) – provides settlement and integration programs for students and their families within the school and the community.

tefie.csf.bc.ca

Société de développement économique de la Colombie-Britannique – supports initiatives allowing the economic development of the Francophone community.

sdecb.com

Le Cercle des Canadiens Français de Prince George – organizes socio-cultural and educational activities, offers services in French, and encourages the integration of newcomers through IRCC's Welcoming Francophone Communities (WFC) initiative.

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