

We may have them Refugees may not.

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Life Skills

for sponsored refugees

"When we arrived in Canada, I was totally confused about what will happen to me and my family. You see, I did not speak English. None of us spoke the language. It looks very different here compared to where we were. I started worrying but at the same time I was excited that finally, after a long time living in a horrible situation with no good drinking water or other basic human needs, we are now safe."

Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Congo (Kinshasa), or Iraq. We are happy to be here. No more persecution and reunited with our relatives at last.

Everything is so different here: Buses and cars. Street signs and traffic signals. The way people interact. How they show respect for each other.

Where do we start? What do we need to learn first? Who can tell us what we need to learn?

We asked our Settlement Counsellor. She introduced us to the Life Skills Trainer program.

For our first week or two in Winnipeg, some of us will live in the Welcome Place Residence at 404 Qu'Appelle Avenue. It's Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council's temporary residence for refugee newcomers. What do we need to learn? What are the house customs at 404 Qu'Appelle?

"Finally we are here in Canada, but the question remains: Who will speak to us in our own language? Three days later the Life Skills Trainer, who speaks our first language, comes to our door. From that moment I was relieved. I said to myself: Thanks God some of my problems are solved."

We are privately sponsored refugee newcomers. We and our families recently arrived in Winnipeg. We came to Canada from Burma,

A publication of the



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Life Skills for sponsored refugees

continued.

We are surprised the list is so long.

- Safety comes first, especially fire prevention
- What do we do in an emergency
- How do we keep our family safe from smoke and fire
- How to use the fridge, stove, TV, DVD, thermostat, washer, dryer, blinds and fan
- Respecting building security and maintaining apartment safety
- Disposing of garbage and recyclable materials
- Using cleaning supplies safely and appropriately
- Taking care of our personal hygiene and health
- Looking after our dental health
- Keeping our children safe from potential hazards

Some of us will live with our relatives for our first few weeks in Winnipeg. Soon all of us will move into our very own apartments. The list of rules for our apartment is similar to the list of house customs at Welcome Place residence. Our Life Skills Trainer assures us he can introduce us to unfamiliar apartment rules.

Shortly after we move into our own apartment, our Life Skills Trainer meets us again. He encourages us to choose additional skills we may want to learn. It feels good to be able to choose the skills we want to learn. When we first arrived, we did not know there was so much to learn about

living in Winnipeg.

Before our Life Skills Trainer leaves, we agree on a time to meet. When the Life Skills Trainer comes to our apartment, we invite him in. He uses practical activities to teach us the life skills we want to learn. This list of life skills is also long. And each item has a lengthy set of specific skills. The items include:

- Grocery and other shopping
- Winter survival skills
- Public transportation
- Banking and budgeting
- How we can access community services
- Canadian culture and ways of living
- Venues for our teens
- Where we can access computers
- How to prepare lunches for our school aged children
- How we can prepare a balanced diet
- Cooking with locally available food

While in exile, we lost most of our independence. We had to depend on others. Now, by teaching us Canadian life skills, our Trainer is helping us regain our independence.

We, as refugee newcomers, are benefitting greatly from learning life skills specific to the culture and climate of Winnipeg and we encourage all privately sponsored refugee newcomers to Manitoba to ask their MIIC (Welcome Place) Settlement Counsellor about the Life Skills Trainer program.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

and a prosperous
New Year

