

We may have them Refugees may not.

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Network of Support

Helping Newcomers Settle in Winnipeg

by Ariana Yaftali

Language is one of the main obstacles to the rapid settlement of refugee newcomers to a new country. It takes a while to learn an additional language, to apply it, and to feel you are understood. However, as newcomers become more proficient in the language of their host country, their settlement process becomes easier.

Knowing the language of their new home opens up many options on how to move forward and achieve their goals. For example, they can get a better job, go back to school, attend university, or get some professional training to start a new career. The process of learning a new language and integrating into an unfamiliar society is a lengthy process. The length of this process varies from newcomer to newcomer.

"I sponsored my siblings through my neighbourhood church four years ago. I helped them settle successfully in Winnipeg. I had a settlement plan and a good network of friends who provided whatever type of support I needed," said Mary.

Mary kept calling us to inquire on how she could best help her family. Part of Mary's settlement plan was to keep checking on resources and agencies which help newcomers. She asked us for our list of roles and responsibilities for a sponsoring group. Once she received notice that her siblings were arriving, she called to make an appointment with us. At our joint coordination meeting, I provided her with the list of roles and responsibilities, opened files for the clients and introduced them to their settlement counsellor.

A while ago, when I was going for a walk, I ran into Mary. She told me about her siblings and what they were doing.

"You remember me and my siblings? They are doing very well. They completed their English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes. Now they are going to university and working at the same time. I am so happy to see them being successful," said Mary.

Mary's friends were actively involved in the settlement process of her family members. Some of her friends helped the newcomers by offering conversational English classes, as well as orienting them to employment opportunities, the educational system, our healthcare system, and banking services. They helped Mary's siblings find resources, and introduced them to recreational activities.

"I was so happy to have my friends, and very grateful for their support. We had a regular class in our church on these topics," expressed Mary.

As a refugee advocate, I found that moment very joyful. I was so happy to learn that the people I had helped were doing so well and that they had become established in their new lives.

We hear and witness the success stories of newcomers, and these stories are worth sharing with others. It helps us to understand what newcomers can do after they arrive in Canada. This helps us to be more positive and confident that refugees are committed to contributing to their new homes once they are here. We have to be there for them!

Sponsoring refugees and helping newcomers in their new homes are both rewarding. You rescue them from their plight and once they arrive, you help facilitate their settlement process. Newcomers are always grateful for the support of sponsoring groups and new friends. In most cases, family members, newcomers and sponsoring group members remain friends forever.

What a joyful experience when you have a network of support, and when the people who are part of this network become your friends. It's a great opportunity to learn from each other and to share each other's cultures, customs and traditions!

A publication of the



For comments/questions/suggestions
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From where will refugees come to Manitoba in 2008?

From which countries of origin will the Canadian Government bring refugees to Manitoba in 2008? From which countries of origin will Manitoba groups want to sponsor refugees? Here are some indicators sponsoring groups may well want to take into account.

For the past three years the numbers of refugees arriving in Manitoba from Burma, Congo (Kinshasa), and Ethiopia have increased sharply. These refugees represent close to 50 % of all the Government assisted and privately sponsored refugees arriving in Winnipeg in 2007.

Similar, proportionately smaller increases were seen for refugees arriving from Burundi, Colombia, Eritrea, and Somalia. These arrivals made up nearly 25% of the Government assisted refugees.

During 2007 the number of privately sponsored refugees arriving in Manitoba from Sierra Leone and Liberia dropped suddenly. Currently less than 1% of privately sponsored Sierra Leonean refugees are being accepted to come to Canada. This is due to changing country conditions. Once Canada deemed it to be safe for people to return to these two countries, virtually all privately sponsored refugees were rejected. These refugees are now seen to have what the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) calls durable solutions.

Most privately sponsored refugees who earlier fled Rwanda are now being rejected by Canada. Once again, Canada now considers it to be reasonably safe for them to return to their home country.

South Africa and Guinea have plans in place to allow refugees who fled to their countries to integrate locally and eventually become permanent residents. Hence, refugees currently in these two countries are also unlikely to be accepted to come to Canada.

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In the foreseeable future, it is highly unlikely that refugees who fled to countries like Turkey, Greece and Iran will be able to come to Canada as privately sponsored refugees. Furthermore, it is usually most difficult to bring to Canada refugees who fled to countries in Europe.

In 2008 CIC is committed to bring to Canada 3,400 Iraqis currently in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and various Middle East cities. CIC also plans to bring to Canada 900 Afghan refugees now mostly in Islamabad, Pakistan. As well, CIC plans to bring to Canada 2,200 refugees of African origin who are currently in Kenya and other East African countries. Lastly, in 2008, CIC plans to bring to Canada 1,900 Colombian refugees currently in Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela. These CIC commitments could continue into 2009. Sponsoring groups may also want to take note that refugees brought to Canada from these countries will probably include Visa Office Referred (VOR) and Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) cases.

By way of group processing projects, involving protracted situations, CIC plans to bring to Canada 1,000 more Burmese Karen refugees currently in camps in Thailand. From 2009 to 2011, providing camp authorities agree, CIC plans to bring to Canada 5,000 Bhutanese currently in Nepal.

Sponsoring groups are encouraged to consider current and relevant country of origin information, when deciding which refugees to sponsor.

Another Workshop

HELPING REFUGEES PREPARE FOR THEIR INTERVIEW

On **Wednesday, March 26, 2008, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.** Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (Welcome Place) will conduct "Part 2" of a workshop on helping sponsored refugees "Prepare for Their Interview". The location: 397 Carlton Street in Winnipeg.

Topics will include:

- The nature and purpose of the interview
- Defining persecution and protection
- Telling your story of persecution
- Providing evidence
- Talking through an interpreter
- Questions refugees may be asked

Help sponsored refugees prepare for their interview. Join us March 26th from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. and learn more about how to help sponsored refugees prepare for their eligibility interview.

To register, call us at 977-1000.