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Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada

# For a Better Understanding of French Language Communities



*One of the main strengths of the LINC program as identified by learners and graduates in focus groups was the opportunity to learn about Canada and the Canadian way of life. This should include learning about French-language communities because of Canada's linguistic duality. One of the purposes of this guide is to create awareness for LINC/ESL instructors and newcomers on this topic.*

*Over a number of years, initiatives have been launched at the federal level, as well as in most provinces and territories, to support the growth and stability of French-speaking minority communities through immigration. As a LINC/ESL instructor, you are instrumental in this enterprise. By being supportive of French-speaking students willing to be part of a French language community, you are actively helping them to integrate into Canadian society. This is also one of the purposes of this guide.*

## Let's begin by answering a few questions you may have at the outset.

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### Isn't French just another language among several others spoken in Canada?

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No, Canada's two official languages are English and French, as proclaimed by the Official Languages Act. Because this linguistic duality is at the heart of Canadian values, the language rights of both Anglophones in Quebec as well as Francophones in the other provinces of Canada are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It provides protection from public policies that could violate minority language rights.

Here are the main points of these language rights:

- Canadians are able to use one of Canada's two official languages to obtain services from the Federal Government and its agencies such as VIA Rail and Post Canada as well as some commercial organizations such as Air Canada.
- The Minority Language Education Rights section also provides Francophones the right to French-language education.
- Either French or English may be used in Parliament.
- All documents of Parliament must be published in both languages

### What about the status of the other languages spoken in Canada?

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The Canadian Charter of Rights must be interpreted in a manner that respects the multicultural heritage of Canadians. Respect for and promotion of the linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity of Canadian society is protected by the Charter. Learners who have concerns about the status of their culture, their religion or their language can be reassured that the Charter protects individual rights in that regard. Linguistic duality does not preclude multiculturalism, nor does it mean that other languages cannot be spoken or promoted by linguistic groups.

### What does the term “French-language minority communities” mean?

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French is the native language of 6.8 million Canadians. More than one million Francophones live in provinces and territories outside Quebec. This French-speaking population is a minority group in each of these provinces and territories because of its proportion relative to the size of the English-speaking population, hence the term French-speaking *minority* communities. The proportion of Francophones and Anglophones varies from province to province and from one region to another:

- In many villages, towns and neighbourhoods, Francophones form the majority, as in Casselman in Eastern Ontario where 80% of the population is Francophone.
- In other regions, they form a fair portion of the local population; for example, in Bathurst, New Brunswick, 50% of the population is Francophone.

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- In large urban centres such as Winnipeg, Toronto or Ottawa, Francophones have a minority status, but they still may benefit from services in French such as education, health, legal, settlement and social services. A few businesses may even go out of their way to cater to this linguistic profile, as they find it profitable.
- In many regions of Canada, it is difficult to find local services in French because the French-speaking population is dispersed. Although they do not live in closely knit French-speaking communities, they may still have access to online services in French from the government and institutions such as libraries, the media, online education, etc.
- In some minority community settings, being bilingual in French and English is an advantage for many jobs where a person works with the public.

### Why should learners be concerned with French-language minority communities?

Learners should be aware of French-language communities because they are part of Canada's heritage, they helped shape Canadian national character, and most importantly, they continue to shape Canada's national identity.

"From pre-arrival to citizenship, ensuring the successful integration and retention of French-speaking immigrants will help them thrive economically, culturally and socially and will help to grow both our economy and our country."

The Honourable Ahmed Hussen,  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

## Role of LINC/ESL instructors

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Learners in your classroom could benefit from your guidance in two ways:

- through creating awareness in your classroom on the subject of French-language communities.
- through facilitating integration for those newcomers in your classroom who favour French as their first official language in Canada. As they are often competent in one of Canada's official languages, at least orally, they are well prepared to settle in a French-language community.

In order to assume this responsibility, a LINC/ESL instructor may often play pivotal roles.

### 1) The LINC/ESL instructor as a guide.

Newcomers in your class may not understand the reasons behind Canada's language policies and why services are available in French to the French-language minority communities. Your role as a guide is to provide information and explain how Canada's linguistic and multicultural policies are complementary. Encourage openness and foster curiosity about Canadian history, culture and traditions.

To be comfortable in this area, it could be worthwhile to familiarize yourself on the subject of the Official Languages Act and linguistic duality:

- <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/official-languages-act-1988>;
- <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/bilingualism>
- <https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/newsletter/2017/canadas-linguistic-duality-heart-inclusiveness-diversity>

### 2) The LINC/ESL instructor as an information provider on French Language communities

Most learners are eager to learn more about Canada and its peoples. Furthermore, some intend to become Canadian citizens in the near future and will need to be well informed on this topic in order to pass the Canadian citizenship test.

Use additional information made available in the *Language Companion* on French history, French culture, bilingualism, French-language services and other topics concerning the French-language minority communities.

Spark a discussion on the subject. Answer questions about Francophones in your community and your province. Provide multiple opportunities in your classroom for learners to raise questions, concerns, personal issues and problems on the subject.

You may find this information in the following places:

- a) As a start, check the *Infographics on the official language minority communities in Canada* section on the following web site and click on your province for an outline of its French-speaking community:  
<https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/statistics/infographics>
- b) Indicate where learners may get additional information. Here are some suggestions:
  - i) Your favourite FSL or LINC teaching resources on the Web.

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- ii) Have Stage 1 learners search the Web with a few keywords such as “Francophone” + the *name* of your city or your province. They will be surprised to see all of the information available.
- iii) Have advanced learners, especially those newcomers who come from a French-speaking country, search:
  - (1) the internet with the following keywords:
    - (i) [the name of your village, town or province]
      - + Francophone;
      - + services in French;
      - + French immigration;
      - + librairie (bookstore);
      - + Francophone personalities;
      - + famous Francophones
      - + Francophone festivals;
      - + French restaurant;
      - + French news;
      - + French tourism;
      - + French radio;
      - + French television;
      - etc.
  - (2) the thousands of pages in Wikipedia on French-Canadian culture, geography, history and Canada’s minority groups
  - (3) the hundreds of articles about French Canada in the Canadian Encyclopedia
  - (4) Discover *Canada*, Canada’s study guide for the citizenship test

### 3) The LINC/ESL instructor as a mentor for critical thinking

Go beyond any printed information or visual media, especially for more advanced learners. Discuss in an open and non-threatening environment thought-provoking issues, values and social problems like equity, multiculturalism, linguistic duality, potential advantages of being bilingual or multilingual, linguistic rights and linguistic discrimination. When developing your module plans, consider these issues in your context/background information section; you will help learners better understand complex and controversial issues so they become critical thinkers well equipped to make informed opinions.

### 4) The LINC/ESL instructor as a coach to help French-speaking newcomers get settled.

Specifically targeting French-speaking immigrants in your class to help them settle in a French-speaking community is in line with the government's most recent policies, at the federal and provincial levels.

The following excerpt from a report from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages will help you understand why this policy came into being.

French-speaking immigrants, who often arrive with more than one foreign education credential and years of work experience abroad, are not only hoping to make a place for themselves, but also to contribute to the social and economic development of their new communities. [...] Given these expectations and aspirations, the federal, provincial and territorial governments, with the support of partners (including French-speaking communities), should do everything in their power to help newcomers get settled and promote their social, economic and professional integration so that their dreams can become reality.

Time to Act for the Future of Francophone Communities: Redressing the Immigration Imbalance  
<https://www.clo-ocol.gc.ca/en/publications/redressing-immigration-imbalance>

#### a) Where to start

- i) When collecting information about your learners at the start of a semester, consider asking specifically about your learners' country of origin, languages spoken at home and the school of choice for their children.

#### b) Topics of interest for French-language newcomers

Some newcomers from French-speaking countries may not receive sufficient information overseas or when entering Canada about the possibility of settling in a French-speaking community and receiving French-language services.

As the semester progresses and you become better acquainted with your learners, you could informally advise Francophones in your class about available French-language services.

Example topics of interest may include education, settlement and health services.

- i) **Education is available in French** for Francophone children. To find a French-language school anywhere in Canada they may go to: <https://elf-canada.ca/en/>.
- ii) **Settlement in a French-speaking community.** Francophone establishment service providers are available in most major cities in Canada.

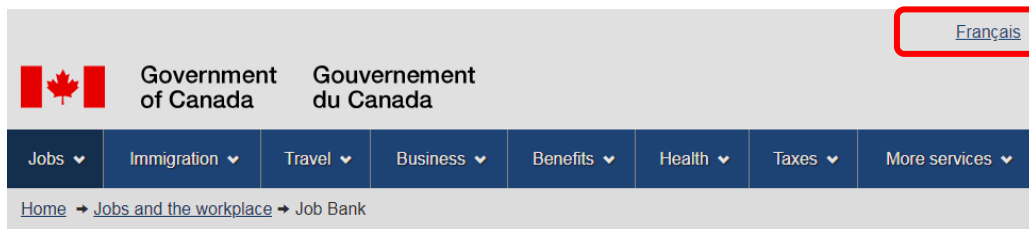
<https://immigrationfrancophone.ca/en/about/francophone-immigration-networks>  
<https://immigrationfrancophone.ca/fr/immigrer/services-d-etablissement>

Across Canada, 13 Francophone Immigration Networks (Réseaux en immigration francophone, RIFs) combine the energy and know-how of over 250 partner institutions and community organizations. The RIFs bring together, more than a single organization could, all the front-line actors who play key roles in attracting, recruiting, welcoming and integrating French-speaking immigrants in Canada's Francophone and Acadian communities.

<https://immigrationfrancophone.ca/en/about/francophone-immigration-networks>

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- iii) **Health services in French can also be found in major cities in Canada.** It may be vitally important for newcomers to be able to speak French to a health-care provider. Clear communication between a patient and a health-care provider is fundamental to ensure quality of care.
- c) Examples of information available in French.
  - i) An English and French resource section on French-language minority communities has been added in the *Language Companion*. This will provide learners with knowledge on French history, culture, leisure and media as well as practical information on education, health services, getting a job and more.
  - ii) A complete index of services available in French is provided by the Federal Government and most provincial governments and can be accessed here:  
<https://www.canada.ca/fr/emploi-developpement-social/ministere/portefeuille/service-canada/programmes.html>
  - iii) In order to read the federal and provincial government sites in French, French-speaking learners should routinely click on the *Français* button of government web sites; it's usually placed on the upper right-hand corner. Example:



- iv) When the time comes to put into practice real-life classroom activities, Francophones in your class may find relevant information in French by typing the correct key words into their search engine as previously suggested, then by clicking on the *Français* button.

Here are a few examples to illustrate the extent to which Francophones in your classroom can reap the benefits of doing a bit of research under your supervision:

- (1) Finding a bilingual job using the Government of Canada's *Job Bank* Web Site:  
<https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/jobsearch/advancedsearch>

They should check the appropriate boxes in the "Language at Work" section.

A screenshot of the 'Language at work' section from the Job Bank website. It features a title 'Language at work' followed by three checkboxes: 'Bilingual' (checked with a green checkmark), 'French' (checked with a green checkmark), and 'English' (unchecked). The checkboxes are arranged vertically.

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- (2) Finding a financial institution: these links will give your students the opportunity to find a francophone credit union.
  - (a) in Northern Ontario  
<https://www.caissealliance.com/en/caisses/>
  - (b) in South and Eastern Ontario:  
[https://www.desjardins.com/fr/votre\\_caisse/accueil.jsp?transit=82900153](https://www.desjardins.com/fr/votre_caisse/accueil.jsp?transit=82900153)
  - (c) in the Maritimes  
<https://www.uni.ca/en/contact-us/result.cfm#sm.00000q908g0napfmrrp23lutg09c4>
  - (d) in Manitoba  
<http://www.caisse.biz/en/find-a-location/location-list/>
- (3) Finding business, professional, cultural, community, religious and recreational services.  
Most francophone provincial associations have a directory listing available French-language services. Alberta's website is a good example:  
<http://servicesenfrancais.ca/accueil> (French only)
- d) Finally, French-language newcomers may be interested in using some online tools for self-improvement.
  - i) To self-identify their French-language proficiency online using the NCLC benchmarks (French-language CLB benchmarks), they can use the online self-assessment tool found here: <https://nclc-ael.ca/accueil?nb=true>
  - ii) To get a sense of the specific French-language skills required in non-regulated trades (i.e Cook, Child Care Administrator, Respiratory Therapist, etc.), they can visit:  
<https://www.language.ca/ressourcesexpertise/competences-essentielles/#1522069462984-8bf382ae-41d4>

## Conclusion

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In the language classroom, it is essential to demonstrate equity and diversity, including information about French-language minority communities in Canada and to help French-speaking immigrants in your class to locate and access appropriate support available within the community. Please remember that your dedication and positive efforts can and do make a difference in your learners' positive outlook on French-language minority communities - and in some cases, their successful settlement in a French-language minority community.