



BVOR NEWS

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

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Winnipeg's Accueil Francophone SAH helped bring Jolie Niyota Lifino to Manitoba through the BVOR program.

Francophone SAH welcomes 22 BVOR refugees

St. Boniface, located between the Red and Seine rivers in Winnipeg, is the home of one of Canada's larger francophone communities outside of Quebec. Many Franco Manitoban associations are located here, including Accueil Francophone (Francophone Welcome) and its umbrella agency the *Société de la francophonie manitobaine*. Both have a commitment to maintaining bilingualism in Manitoba.

Since the early 2000s the francophone community has welcomed a growing number of immigrants from non-European countries, among them refugees. Most recently, these have included BVOR refugees. "We brought 22 BVOR refu-

The Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program

The BVOR Program helps resettle refugees identified by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) as the most vulnerable in need of resettlement. It is called blended because it is a cost sharing arrangement. Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides up to six months of income support for the newcomers, while private sponsors provide another six months of financial support, start-up costs and up to one year of social and emotional support.

gees to Manitoba in 2019," says Boris Ntambwe, manager of Accueil Francophone's Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP).

The BVOR newcomers come from Guinea, Central African Republic, Rwanda, DR Congo, Benin and Sudan. Some were families, some were individuals. All stayed in Manitoba through their first year; one now lives in Montreal. Most were francophone, but not all. Accueil Francophone, a RAP-SPO agency, provides multilingual services to all newcomers, whatever their language. "We are a francophone initiative to support humanity," says Boris.

"Immigration and refugees keep bilingualism alive," says Boris. The children of francophone newcomers attend French language schools. "We say English is a virus, you're going to catch it anyway," says Boris, referring to how francophone minorities adapt to an anglophone envi-

ronment. Francophone newcomer adults join Accueil Francophone's English Clubs in order to become "job-ready" in the majority anglophone economy. Accueil Francophone offers all clients a seamless settlement pathway.

Sponsoring the stranger is not new to volunteers and staff at Accueil Francophone. "When the Syrian surge happened in 2015, the francophone community welcomed a lot of Syrians," says Boris. "They were very happy with how they were supported."

Accueil Francophone became a SAH in 2018. "We are very happy to be the first francophone SAH outside of Quebec," says Boris.

Bruno represents Accueil Francophone on the National SAH Council, "As the only francophone SAH it is a very good way for us to increase visibility and inclusion." As a member of the SAH Council's BVOR working group, Boris hopes to see more funding for BVOR sponsors in future. He credits the special 2018 Refugee Hub fund with allowing Accueil Francophone to sponsor BVOR refugees. "Otherwise, it is very difficult," he says.

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BVOR staff changes

Please welcome Paula Marshall to the RSTP team as BVOR Worker/RSTP Trainer. Parastoo Aznavahzadeh, the previous BVOR Worker, has been seconded for a year to a new RSTP position supporting SAH capacity-building.

Paula has more than nine years' experience serving immigrants and refugees. She was previously the SAH representative for the Salvation Army and has been the chair of the Southern Ontario Sponsors Group.

Paula will be responsible for managing the BVOR program at RSTP and for training and supporting Southern Ontario SAHs. Parastoo is expected to return to her home position as BVOR worker April 1, 2022.



Contact Paula Marshall at bvor@rstp.ca with all your BVOR questions!

RSTP virtual services

RSTP provides a full range of virtual services to Canada's refugee sponsorship community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Check our website, www.rstp.ca, for dates and times of upcoming online workshops and courses.

RSTP trainers across Canada are available for virtual consultation from 9 to 5 each day, by appointment.

[Find your local trainer here.](#)

BLENDING VISA OFFICE-REFERRED (BVOR) PROGRAM

For more information, visit www.rstp.ca or email bvor@rstp.ca

Refugee
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