



NEWCOMER SERVICES



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In this section we list basic orientation points and provide some resources that would help you understand how various systems work (e.g. health, education, etc.). You may start this process by connecting with your local settlement organization (www.soics.ca). Their services are free for most newcomers and they can help you with your settlement process – from getting your documents in order, to getting free English language classes, finding housing, school for your children, and much more.

Basic Orientation Points

Daily Communication

Canada is a multicultural country with a mosaic structure where everyone is contributing in creating cultural richness. However, knowing a few things that most people value could be helpful in trying to fit into a new environment. So, here are a few observations shared by other newcomers:

- Most people are friendly and polite – they smile, make an eye contact and say hello to strangers (big cities – in buildings, elevators, etc.; small towns- everywhere, including on the streets).
- It is common to exchange “small talk” with strangers - short conversations about weather or sports.
- Since many people have allergies to scents, most workplaces ask you not to wear perfume or scented oils. However, you definitely need to wear deodorant. You will also find that many people are sensitive to food smells, so please make sure not to wear the clothes you cooked in to work, school or any other public space.
- Many people are eager to help, so it is okay to stop strangers and ask questions.
- Personal space is important to many, so please try and keep at least an arm’s length distance between you and another person.
- It takes time to establish relationships – so don’t be discouraged if your neighbours or colleagues don’t invite you to their homes for dinners, be pro-active – share some food and culture.

Did You Know?

Penticton is one of two cities in the world nested between two lakes (the other one is a Swiss town called Arth)

TV, Internet & Mobile Networks

These services are expensive in Canada, be prepared to pay around \$50 monthly for your mobile phone connection (home internet and TV cable will be additional \$100 or more). There are a variety of plans with and without contracts that you can find (some companies require you to sign a two-three year contract in exchange for a good plan), so do some research before agreeing to any contract.

Alcohol, Tobacco & Cannabis

It is prohibited to smoke and drink in public places, other than in specially designated areas (e.g. drinking at bars/restaurants/breweries, smoking in designated areas outside of some buildings that have ashtrays). Cannabis is legal in Canada but it is prohibited to use it in public spaces. Smoking tobacco and cannabis is not allowed in bars, including patios. It is illegal to drive under the influence of alcohol, cannabis or other recreational drugs.

Utilities and Garbage Removal

Your rental agreement must specify if you need to pay for certain types of utilities. If you do, you would need to open an account with the service provider (municipal or private). If you are not sure who the provider is, check with your property owner.

You will notice that in South Okanagan most garbage bins have locks on them – this is to make sure that your garbage does not attract wildlife. Properly secure your garbage, and keep it indoors until pick-up.

It is very important to recycle your garbage (separate items that could be re-used from the waste that will go into a landfill). Here is the link to a video: <https://youtu.be/Y2v5GhQo1L0> and the recycling guide: <https://www.penticton.ca/assets/Departments/Public~Works/2018/Recycle%20guide%20pgs%204-5.pdf>

Pedestrian Rules

This might seem funny to you but depending on where we come from we may have different ways of walking on the streets and using pedestrian signs and signals. Here are some observations about those rules in Canada:

- walk on the right side of the pedestrian walk/pavement;
- when walking in a group, be considerate to other pedestrians – line-up on the right side of the walk to let others pass you;
- use pedestrian walks/crosswalks to cross the street;

- do not cross the street anywhere outside the pedestrian walk/crosswalk (this is called “jaywalking”), you may be fined for this;
- in many instances you would need to press the button to activate the pedestrian signals and cross the street (the yellow buttons are located on the streetlight posts);
- when getting on a bus/escalator/elevator – do not push others to get in, instead line-up/stand behind a person in front of you;
- when entering/existing buildings hold doors for others;
- and always say “sorry” if you accidentally touch/push anyone.

“Arrival Advisor” Mobile App

This mobile application will provide you with a lot of useful information about various services in British Columbia, including information on employment, health care, money & banking, housing, education, legal & immigration services. You can download it for free from Google Play or App Store. It is currently available in English, French, and Arabic, and soon will be offered in Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), Korean, Punjabi, and Tagalog.

“My voice, my language goes right across this country like the breeze”. Elder Joey Pierre - <https://www.syilx.org/about-us/syilx-nation/nsyilxen-language>

Settlement Services

South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS), 340 Ellis St., Penticton; 250-492-6299; www.soics.ca

SOICS provides free services to immigrant in the whole South Okanagan-Similkameen region. The services include English language classes, employment services, mentoring, volunteer opportunities, certificate courses, multicultural events and more.

Supports for Temporary Foreign Workers in Similkameen

Lower Similkameen Community Services Society: 250-499-2352, <http://tftpwebhost.com/lscss>

Language Training for Immigrants and Refugees

South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS), 340 Ellis St., Penticton; 250-492-6299; www.soics.ca

- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) (child-minding available)
- LINC Home Study
- Occupation-specific language training (e.g. business English)
- Speech Craft- public speaking and presentation skills program by Toastmasters

Language Training for Temporary Foreign Workers & Foreign-born Canadian Citizens

Lower Similkameen Community Services Society: 250-499-2352, <http://tppwebhost.com/lscss>

“nsyilxcen is the language spoken by and distinguishes the Syilx/Okanagan from other indigenous peoples. It is part of the Salish language family which is distinct from our Salish neighbors, like the Spokane, the Nlaka’pamux, and the Secwepemc. nsyilxcen is spoken in all the districts of the Syilx/Okanagan

Translation & Interpretation

- SOICS has a diverse team and volunteers that may be able to assist you with your basic interpretation needs: 340 Ellis St., Penticton; 250-492-6299; www.soics.ca
- You could also use the Google Translate app to help you communicate.
- Centre Culturel Francophone de L’Okanagan, 702 Bernard Ave, Kelowna; 250-860-4074; www.leccfo.org