



NewJourneys.ca
Your online Friendship Centre resource

A Guide for Families Moving to the City

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About this Guide

You and your family have chosen to become one of many families that will leave their home community and move to the city in search of a better life. Hopefully, your transition to the city will be an easy one, but you might encounter some obstacles along the way. Upon arriving in the city you may suddenly find yourself in an unfamiliar, fast-paced environment with people who have different values and beliefs than you. This can be overwhelming, especially if you are not familiar with your surroundings or if you don't know anyone. Be assured, however, that these feelings are usually temporary and in time you will adapt.

This guide was created to assist you in navigating your new environment. It is intended to be used along with the service directories that are located on this website. These directories provide contact information for many of the programs and services that can assist you in making a successful transition to city life.

Preparing to Leave

It is important to begin planning your move well in advance; the better your plan, the easier your move will be. There are many things that can be taken care of prior to leaving your community for the city. For example, you can explore options for employment, housing, healthcare or education for you and/or your family. Even making a few preliminary phone calls prior to leaving will make it much easier once you arrive.

What to Take:

What you take with you when you move depends on your situation and financial resources. Some important items to take are:

- Identification including status cards, driver's licenses, birth certificates, provincial health insurance cards, passports and social insurance cards.
- Immunization records for your children.
- School records such as your children's most recent report cards.
- Financial information such as bankcards, cheque books, credit cards and investment portfolios.
- Legal documents.
- Any medications that you or your children take.
- Family photographs and mementos.
- Jewelry and other valuables.
- Children's personal belongings such as toys.
- A list of important phone numbers and addresses.
- Furniture.
- Clothing.

Finances:

If you don't have a source of income set up for when you arrive in the city, such as a job, apply for financial assistance as soon as possible. The process for applying for assistance varies from province to province. Information on how to apply can be found on the municipal website of your city. When applying for financial assistance you may be asked to provide some of the following documents:

- Identification such as birth certificates and status cards for you and your children.
- Banking information including account balances.
- Proof of any assets.
- Custody documents including any child support orders.
- Separation agreements including any spousal support orders.
- Proof of address.
- Proof that your children are registered in school.

Apply as soon as possible even if you don't have all of the required documentation, as your case worker may be able to assist you in obtaining the information that is missing. In addition to providing financial support, your case worker may also be able to assist you with:

- Obtaining additional funds if you, your spouse or your children have special dietary needs.
- Obtaining identification or other legal documentation.
- Obtaining funds to cover moving and storage costs.
- Obtaining basic furniture such as beds, dressers and cribs.
- Transportation so that you can attend important appointments or search for a job.

Finding a Home: Searching for a new home in an unfamiliar city can be overwhelming. Here are some tips to help you find a good home for your family:

- Apply for subsidized housing as soon as possible. Wait lists can be long but some cities have Aboriginal housing programs.
- If you are unsure of what neighbourhood is most suitable, ask around. Family, friends, resource workers or your local Friendship Centre may be able to assist you.
- Try to find a place that is close to schools, community centres and shopping. This will cut down on transportation costs and will provide opportunities for socialization.

Employment, Training and Education: There are many resources available to help if you or your spouse has not already found work, are not attending school or if financial assistance has required that you seek employment:

- Your financial assistance case worker, who may be able to assist you with job placement.
- Local job banks.

- Online job banks such as the Job Bank (www.jobbank.gc.ca)
- Your local Friendship Centre, where staff may know of jobs available in the urban Aboriginal community.
- The local organization that delivers Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) programming. ASETS may be able to assist you with wage subsidies, childcare, resume writing and skills development.
- Employment agencies have listings for both temporary and permanent employment.
- The program and service directory for your city located on this website, which lists more employment resources.

If you lack work experience or would like to change your career path, you could consider volunteering with a local organization such as a Friendship Centre or Head Start program. Volunteering is a great way to develop or practice job skills and meet new people. Another way to develop job skills is through education or training. If you would like to explore opportunities for training or furthering your education consider the following:

- Your financial assistance case worker may be able to assist you with the costs of training or upgrading, such as supplies and transportation.
- If you have not completed high school and want to do so, contact your local school board. Many school boards offer adult education programs.
- Contact the local organization that delivers Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) programming. ASETS may be able to assist with childcare, costs associated with apprenticeships and accessing skills training.
- Contact local career colleges or vocational schools. Some of the programs offered by these institutions include bookkeeping, office administration, computer technology and hairdressing.
- Many cities have community colleges or universities if you want to get a degree or diploma. Even if there isn't a college or university located in your city, you may be able to earn credits towards your degree or diploma online. For more information about post-secondary education consult the *Quick Guide for First Nations Post-Secondary Students Moving to the City* located on this website.
- For more education and training resources, consult the program and service directory for your city located on this website.

Your Children and School: If you have school-age children, register them as soon as possible. Attending school will help them settle into a new routine and make new friends. Most school boards require that your child attend school in the area of the city that you live in. However, in certain circumstances some school boards may allow you to register your children in a school that is outside of the area that you are living. For example, if you are temporarily living with family or friends, the school board may allow you to register your children in the area that you intend to move

to. Also, if your children have special needs that cannot be met in the school in your area, arrangements can be made for them to attend a school elsewhere in the city.

Childcare: If you are seeking employment or have decided to return to school, you will need to find childcare. Here are some things to consider:

- Have trusted friends, family or neighbours care for your children.
- Put your children in private in-home daycare or daycare centres. Some cities offer daycare subsidies but there is often a wait list. You should apply even if you currently have no plans to work or go to school because your plans may change in the future.
- Enroll your children in Aboriginal Head Start programs. Head Start programs offer your preschool children the opportunity to learn and socialize in a culturally appropriate environment. Head start programs are often family-centred and connected to the broader urban Aboriginal community and, as a result, your whole family can benefit from being involved.
- Many schools offer before and after school programs for children who are of school age.

Your Health: Regular visits with a primary healthcare provider are an essential part of maintaining your health and wellness:

- Find a family doctor. This may be difficult in some cities where there are shortages. Your provincial Ministry of Health or college of physicians may be able to provide you with contact information for doctors in your area who are accepting new patients.
- If you, your spouse or your children are sick and you do not have a family doctor, go to an urgent care centre or walk-in clinic. If it is an emergency call 911 or go to the emergency room at your nearest hospital.
- Visit a doctor or healthcare provider regularly, especially if you, your spouse or your children suffer from a chronic condition such as diabetes.
- Call your local Friendship Centre or Aboriginal service organization if you are looking for traditional forms of healing. They may know of Elders and traditional healers living in your area.
- Participate in local wellness programming. Many Friendship Centres and Aboriginal service organizations offer programming that focuses on health and wellness.
- Remember that health is about more than just physical well-being. Take time to look after your, your spouse's and your children's emotional, spiritual and psychological well-being.

Culture in the city: Living on-reserve or in a Métis or Inuit community provides a strong cultural foundation for many Aboriginal people where a connectedness to land, language and spirituality may be part of day-to-day life. You may have concerns that by leaving your community you will lose this connectedness. This need not be the case. Many Aboriginal service organizations, including Friendship

Centres, provide cultural programs to support you in maintaining an Aboriginal identity for you and your family. Some opportunities that may be available through these programs include:

- Elder support and teachings.
- Participation in ceremonies such as sweat lodges.
- Community feasts.
- Traditional craft classes and circles.
- Pow wows and other cultural events.

Final Thoughts

The coming weeks and months will present many new challenges for you and your family. It is important to be patient and remember that change takes time. There are many opportunities ahead for you. With love, support and a positive attitude, your life in the city will be a happy one.