



THE CNFS IS COMMITTED TO IMPROVING AND EXPANDING FRENCH-LANGUAGE HEALTH SERVICES IN FRANCOPHONE MINORITY COMMUNITIES. TO THIS END, IT WORKS IN COLLABORATION WITH ITS 11 MEMBER INSTITUTIONS – UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES PRESENT IN FRANCOPHONE MINORITY COMMUNITIES ACROSS CANADA – TO DELIVER THE POSTSECONDARY TRAINING REQUIRED FOR FRANCOPHONE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS.

AT THE CROSSROADS OF HEALTH, TRAINING AND IMMIGRATION

The Consortium national de formation en santé (CNFS) is a pan-Canadian organization bringing together **11 colleges and universities**¹ offering programs of study delivered in French in various healthcare disciplines, as well as **six regional partners**², working to improve access to these health training programs across the country. The CNFS also has a National Secretariat in Ottawa that plays a leadership and coordination role in planning and achieving the Consortium's objectives.

The objective of this strategic alliance is to increase the number and impact of French-speaking healthcare professionals and researchers in order to guarantee and improve French language services, thereby ensuring that these are of high quality and tailored to the needs of Francophone minority communities (FMCs).

THE JOURNEY TOWARD INTEGRATION OF FRANCOPHONE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH GRADUATES (IHGs) INTO FRANCOPHONE MINORITY COMMUNITIES (FMCs)

Since 2009, we have published "PARCOURS," (*journeys*), an electronic newsletter devoted to news on CNFS immigration initiatives. This issue is particularly important, because it is the final issue under the current project aiming at the professional integration of International Health Graduates (IHGs) into FMCs. It will highlight our initial successes and will review the eight years of concerted efforts with our various partners that have enabled us to achieve the outcomes presented here.

Background

A historic overview is required to properly understand the significant accomplishments of the CNFS and our partners in the integration of IHGs into FMCs. In 2006, when we launched our first immigration initiatives, one of the notable characteristics of the social context was a shortage of healthcare professionals. The shortages were even more keenly felt in FMCs, due to the lack of Francophone healthcare professionals able to offer good quality services in French to the populations of these communities.

From the beginning, we found ourselves in entirely new territory, as there were many Francophone internationally educated healthcare graduates and professionals already living in these communities, but with no French resources that met their specific needs. Preliminary CNFS studies³ painted a clear portrait of the situation facing these international professionals who had chosen to live in FMCs. These studies helped us to contribute to the socio-political understanding at the time and laid the foundations for later projects intended to facilitate the integration of immigrant healthcare professionals into these communities. Our efforts and those of our partners over the following eight years have enabled us to make significant advances in support of Francophone IHGs.

Now, at the beginning of 2014, we continue to work to improve the integration process for Francophone healthcare professionals in Canada. This newsletter will summarize our main accomplishments, achieved with the support of our partners in the integration field.

¹ The CNFS member institutions are, from east to west: Université Sainte-Anne, Collège Acadie Île-du-Prince-Édouard, Université de Moncton, Centre de formation médicale du Nouveau-Brunswick, Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, University of Ottawa, La Cité, Laurentian University, Collège Boréal, Université de Saint-Boniface and Campus Saint-Jean of the University of Alberta.

² The CNFS regional partners are, from east to west: regional partners of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nunavut, Institut français of the University of Regina, Collège Nordique of the Northwest Territories, Yukon Service d'Orientation et de Formation des Adultes and Educacentre College of British Columbia.

³ <http://cnfs.net/fr/publications-immigration.php?rowstart=0>

TRAINING

The health care programs offered by the member institutions of the CNFS

The bridging programs offered to internationally educated health professionals

OUR PARTNERS: A SHARED COMMITMENT TO IHGS

CNFS member institutions

The CNFS member institutions remain our primary partners in the implementation of our professional immigration initiatives. They act as anchors to help develop and offer equivalence programs for IHGs.

Five of these institutions have been partners from day one, and to this day, they are still the drivers of progress in their respective regions. These pioneers are the following:

In Ontario: La Cité (Ottawa), University of Ottawa, Collège Boréal (Sudbury and Toronto)

In Manitoba: Université de Saint-Boniface in Winnipeg

In New Brunswick: Université de Moncton, Edmundston Campus

The CNFS National Secretariat has been the communication link and has facilitated concerted action at all levels. It is also the main promoter of project support strategies, particularly in matters involving political and professional bodies called on to work with us in support of professional integration into FMCs.

Community organizations

We have always had an excellent working relationship with the community organizations in the provinces where we have conducted IHG integration initiatives. These organizations' representatives participate in the project advisory committees. This collaboration is enriched through information exchange, sharing of expertise, and IHG referrals to the appropriate services.

Professional associations

Healthcare professional associations are essential partners, as they have the authority to recognize the diplomas and skills of immigrant professionals. This first step in the integration process is so critical that we and our partners have worked directly with some provincial professional associations, including the New Brunswick Society of Medical Laboratory Technologists (NBSMLT) and the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba, as well as national associations such as the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT).

French-language services in the integration process

We have found that collaboration with professional associations varies from one profession to the next and from one province to the next. Moreover, even where there is willingness to collaborate, the lack of adequate — or any — services in French, except in New Brunswick, significantly hinders the process of evaluating Francophone IHGs' skills and credentials.

Although working relationships have been established in some cases, largely due to our outreach activities, other cases require more concerted efforts and direct dialogue to find common ground. Going forward, we plan to continue to develop these collaborations via a more tailored provincial approach.

Other significant partnerships

Our initiatives are focused mainly on two professions: French speaking internationally educated nurses and international medical graduates (IMGs). In 2013, we and our partners addressed the specific needs of these groups by working with the following organizations and institutions, which play crucial roles in the integration of these professionals:

- The University of Ottawa's Faculty of Medicine and the Ottawa Catholic Immigration Centre, for a bridging program offered in French to Francophone IMGs in the Ottawa region
- *Care Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs)*, for the French-language adaptation of their case management tools and resources.

HEALTH

Collaboration with professional colleges in the health field

Involvement by professional colleges in the health sector in the integration of internationally educated health professionals

Collaboration with hospitals and health centres as potential employers

CNFS INITIATIVES: NOTABLE PROGRESS TOWARD A BETTER INTEGRATION OF FRANCOPHONE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH GRADUATES

Working with our partners, we have carried out two major immigration projects:

- Professional integration of IHGs into FMCs, with the support of Employment and Social Development Canada
- Training for Francophone Internationally Educated Healthcare Professionals (IEHPs)

These projects have produced the following concrete and sustainable results:

a) A positive track record and essential resources for Francophone Internationally Educated Healthcare Professionals (IEHPs)

Our first immigration initiative was about developing *Training for Francophone Internationally Educated Healthcare Professionals (IEHPs)*. This project was launched in 2006, and was completed in 2013. With the support of Health Canada in collaboration with our partners, it has led to a number of positive outcomes, including:

- a bridging program for IENs⁴
- a bridging program for French-speaking internationally educated occupational therapists⁵
- French-language adaptation of the Ottawa Catholic Immigration Centre's materials for IMGs. In 2013, as part of a pilot project, a bridging program in French was offered to IMGs in Ottawa.
- two inter-cultural training programs for:
 - other professionals who interact with internationally educated Francophone healthcare professionals; and
 - Francophone Internationally Educated Health Professionals
- an information portal for IMGs: <http://www.cnfs.ca/DIM/fra/> (in French only.)

b) A major accomplishment for CNFS and our partners: a bridging program – in French – for international medical graduates (IMGs)

This program for IMGs is the product of the partnership between the CNFS National Secretariat, the Ottawa Catholic Centre for Immigrants, the CNFS–University of Ottawa Branch, and the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Medicine. In 2013, this partnership culminated in the offer of this program, as a pilot project, to Francophone IMGs in the Ottawa region.

Results from the program have been very promising, as the majority of the participants were able to make progress toward Canadian accreditation and submit applications for residency to CaRMS⁶. For others, the program served as a launching pad for new positive career goals. The program's success can be largely attributed to the fact that it meets a critical need: current and relevant training in French for internationally educated Francophone physicians. The assessment results of the pilot project will help our partners to explore the possibility of duplicating the program in other regions.

c) Long-term effects

The following outcomes are less tangible, but no less important, because they underscore the expertise that we have developed in the integration of French-speaking IEHPs into the healthcare system in Canadian FMCs:

- Greater awareness about French-speaking IEHPs among key integration stakeholders
- Greater commitment from organizations involved in French-speaking IEHP integration, which creates better support networks for our project
- Increased awareness of the needs of French-speaking IEHPs

In conclusion, the creation of the resources presented above and the development of alliances have laid solid foundations to support the integration of internationally educated Francophone healthcare graduates and professionals into FMCs.

⁴ To learn more about these training programs, please contact us at infoquestions@cnfs.net

⁵ Occupational therapy examination and practice preparation project for Internationally educated occupational therapists (OTepp) <http://www.otepp.ca/>

⁶ Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS)

IMMIGRATION

- *Integration of immigrant health professionals*
- *Importance of regional/provincial partnerships*
- *Involvement and collaboration by host communities*

d) Regional professional integration support structures for Francophone IHGs

Back in 2008, a Canada-wide study, funded by Employment and Social Development Canada, looked at the situation of IHGs in FMCs. In 2009, the study led to the development of three regional integration programs in Ottawa (Ontario), Edmundston (New Brunswick) and Winnipeg (Manitoba).

They each provide a single point of access to a set of institutional and community services for IHGs in the areas they cover. They rely on holistic guidance for IHGs and personalized case management. In all cases, our involvement has the same goal: to enhance the employability of IHGs in FMCs.

Last year, with the support of the CNFS National Secretariat, regional program teams helped more than 150 Francophone IHGs to successfully integrate into the healthcare system in FMCs, or to get closer to that goal.

1. Regional IHG integration program in Ottawa (Ontario)

The IHG integration program in Ottawa, managed in partnership by the CNFS–La Cité Branch, has the greatest number of participants. At the end of 2013, Ottawa program officers were actively handling more than 120 individual files. In addition, as in every other year, about 40 additional IHGs from various professions registered to the program. Physicians and nurses remain the most common professions in the program.

Despite certain obstacles that continue to hinder professional integration, it should be noted that the program has enjoyed a great deal of success. Since the program's inception, 45 IHGs have found employment, 13 in their original professions.

Furthermore, the equivalence training offered in 2013 to IMGs enabled a number of physicians to prepare for and successfully complete their Medical Council of Canada examinations and their residency applications to CaRMS, two crucial steps toward professional integration.

Today, the program is trying to steer interested IHGs toward alternative healthcare professions. With this goal in mind, in the fall of 2013, the program team organized an event designed to facilitate direct dialogue between IHGs and some employers in the region.



Some of the participants in the event organized by the CNFS - La Cité Branch that reunited the IHGs and the employers from the region of Ottawa.

The partnership established with CARE Centre for Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) has produced innovative guidance models for Francophone internationally educated nurses that take into account current requirements for the practice of nursing in Ontario.

Finally, in an effort to mitigate the various obstacles faced by IHGs throughout their integration process, the program team is developing a mentoring system to enable IHGs to benefit from the advice and support of other healthcare professionals in the same profession.

For more information: <http://cnfs.lacitec.on.ca/carrieres/professionnelles-etrange.htm> (in French only.)

2. Regional IHG integration program in Winnipeg (Manitoba)

The CNFS–Université de Saint-Boniface Branch manages the Winnipeg program, which may truly be considered a “one-stop” services for professional integration of Francophone IHGs in Saint-Boniface. In 2013, the program was expanded and has become a rallying point for Francophone IEHPs in Winnipeg.

There are currently 20 active files in the program, which include mostly physicians, but also a few nurses. The program also hosts and educates IHGs visiting Winnipeg to explore their options, and responds to information requests from outside the country on the prospects for healthcare employment in Manitoba.

The program team is currently working to strengthen community partnerships and to develop new perspectives for collaboration with the province’s healthcare employers to further facilitate the integration of IHGs settled in Manitoba. More specifically, the program team is exploring the possibility of working with potential partners such as the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. Such collaboration would be instrumental in helping IHGs find employment in the region and in Manitoba’s rural areas.

In 2013, the program teamed up with a private health centre in Winnipeg to set up mentoring activities for IHGs in the program. We are satisfied with the way this collaboration is proceeding.

For more information: <http://www.ustboniface.ca/cnfs/page.aspx?pid=2628> (in French only.)

3. Regional IHG integration program in New Brunswick

The New Brunswick program is managed in partnership with the Université de Moncton, Edmundston Campus, and has 16 registered IHG participants. Direct intervention with the IHGs remains the program’s main component.

Since 2013, the New Brunswick team’s initiatives have focused on strengthening the provincial institutions’ abilities to recruit, manage, integrate and retain IHGs in the work environment. The team has also consolidated its provincial IHG integration initiatives by offering inter-cultural healthcare training, working with employers to recruit IHGs and developing cultural diversity management tools.

Aware of the challenges faced by IHGs in their professional development, the program team works with a number of partners to create an integration support network for the province’s immigrant healthcare professionals. This collaboration, unprecedented in New Brunswick, suggests that the IHG program has helped to lay solid foundations for the integration of new Francophone arrivals to the province.

In the near future, the team may not only see multiple initiatives taking off, but will also help to solidify the CNFS’s influence via more effective guidance of Francophone IHGs in the province.

For more information on the program: http://www.umce.ca/dis_en/

e) Expanded perspectives in immigration

For the last three years, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has funded one-time projects. In 2013, the CNFS and the Association des universités de la francophonie canadienne (AUFC) established the Alliance des établissements postsecondaires de la francophonie canadienne en immigration. Through this Alliance, we hope to draw upon the colleges and universities to enhance and expand all types of training programs for French-speaking immigrants. In doing so, we cannot neglect the international students who, by studying in Canada in French, have the chance to join our Francophone communities. During the winter of 2013-2014, we developed a unifying project addressing language training, prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), and employment integration. The studies arising from this project provide an overview of the PLAR situation and identify employment integration models. In short, this work is helping to improve the abilities of institutions to meet immigrant training needs.

THE ROAD AHEAD...

In 2014, immigration continues to be a significant issue in Canadian politics. In light of the recent reforms to the laws and regulations governing professional immigration, we have, with our partners, built strong foundations that will enable us to address other areas of support for the professional integration of IHGs into FMCs. Our regional programs continue to progress and to help improve the healthcare system by integrating these new Francophone professionals.

However, IHGs could achieve their goals much sooner and more effectively with French-language tools and resources that truly meet their needs. Such tools will help maximize their employability in FMCs.

This leg of the journey is over. We have made real progress, thanks to the resources that we and our partners have developed, as well as the regional IHG integration programs. However, there is still an enormous amount of work to do to improve IHG employability and ensure that they are permanently integrated into the Canadian healthcare system. With eight years of experience behind us, as well as the expertise we have gained in Francophone IHGs integration, we and our partners are ready for the next stage of our journey...

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Canada

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