

IRCOM House Inc.— Welcoming our Newcomer Families

Pathways to Prosperity

November 1st, 2019

Presented by Dorota Blumczynska
Executive Director



Immigrant and Refugee
Community Organization of Manitoba



IRCOM operates 2 housing facilities for newcomers to Canada. IRCOM House Ellen and IRCOM House Isabel are both:

- **Transitional** (Tenants can stay a maximum of 3 years)
- **Affordable** (Rent is set by RAP, Employment Income Assistance [MB's Ontario Works] or Geared to Income [30% of gross family income])
- **Safe** (Each building has a Live-In Caretaker and on-site security overnight)

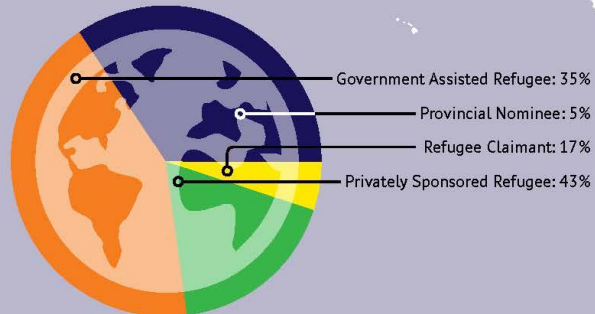
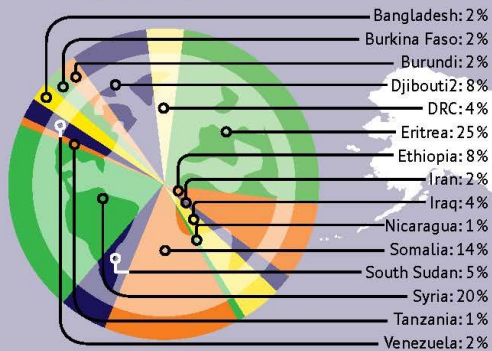
To live at IRCOM House, applicants must be:

- Newcomers living in Canada less than 6 months at time of application OR
- PSR's not yet in Canada but whose sponsors have received a NAT [Notice of Arrival Transmission]
- A family with school aged children [maximum 9 individuals]
- Low income (below LICO – Low Income Cut Off set by Government of Canada)
- In need of additional supports to successfully integrate into the community (as determined by a Needs Based Matrix)

IRCOM House is home to Government Assisted Refugees, Privately Sponsored Refugees, Refugee Claimants, and some Provincial Nominees as well as Self-Employed Immigrants coming from over 20 countries.

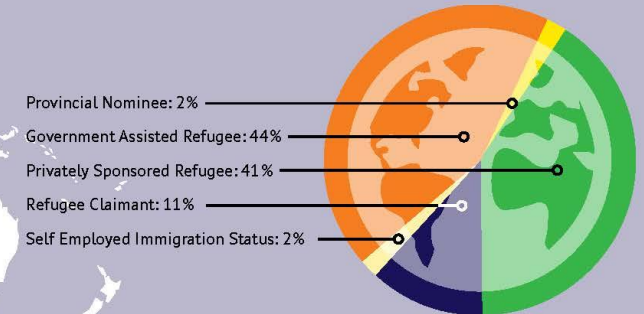
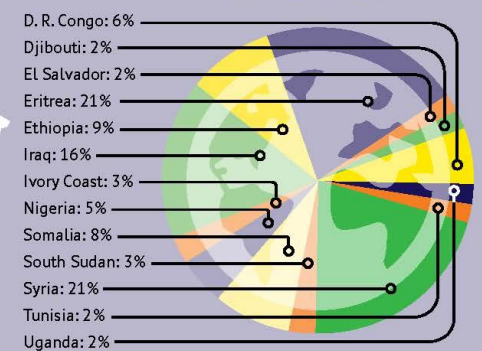
Welcome to IRCOM House!

Ellen House



All charts based on tenant demographics for March 2019

Isabel House



Opened in 2016, IRCOM House Isabel is now home to over 250 newcomers. There are bachelor, 2 bedroom, and 3 bedroom suites, 60 in total. To house larger families of up to 9 individuals, 3 bedroom suites can be reconfigured and attached to adjoining bachelor suites.



Opened in 1991, IRCOM House Ellen also home to over 250 newcomers. There are 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom suites, 64 in total.



At IRCOM, families have access to holistic, wrap around programs and services on site and in the surrounding community, including English language classes, money management training, workshops (E.g. Winter Survival, Tax Preparation, Parenting in Canada, etc.), afterschool programs for children and youth, and volunteering opportunities. Participation in IRCOM's programs is highly recommended for tenants, as it significantly improves the families integration and settlement outcomes.

Our Journey with IRCOM

After School Program has lots of activities for my siblings and me like cooking and Girls' and Boys' Nights. We also learn about leadership and how to find a job. I did much better in school this year with help from the Homework Program and we met professionals like engineers and lawyers to learn about their careers. We also had fun! We visited the Rec Plex, Skyzone, and went swimming. In the summer there are programs for all of us, and I can keep coming to IRCOM even after my family moves out!

House We were so excited when the staff in House called to show us an available suite at IRCOM. Not only was it clean and beautiful, it was accessible for my sister who uses a wheelchair. We came for a tour and signed our lease right away! Once we moved in, House kept our suite in good repair. My neighbour got on-the-job training fixing up suites in the building. This provided him with Canadian work experience and now he has a full-time job in construction!



Our family had been in Canada less than 6 months when we applied to live at IRCOM

Community Resource Program

Staff helped us to develop a settlement plan as soon as we moved in. Having an interpreter and meeting in our home made us feel more comfortable. It is great to have staff on-site to help us with all of our questions. They helped me understand important letters relating to taxes, bills, immigration, and more. IRCOM paid me to cook a meal for our community meeting where we can share our concerns and tell staff what kinds of workshops and programs we want to see at IRCOM. When my eldest daughter was struggling, the social worker really helped our family.

Wrap-around holistic services

The **Greening Program** allows us to garden here in Canada using both the seeds and knowledge from back home! We have container gardens on every balcony where we can put our skills to use, work side-by-side with our neighbours, and beautify our community by growing our own healthy and nutritious food. This year, I was given a plot at Dufferin School to grow vegetables. I like to visit our garden while my daughter plays basketball with her friends.

Settlement and integration

Asset and Capacity Building Programs

provide us with many ways to learn about money management and improve our financial knowledge. I was able to save money and get a matched amount to buy an item important for our family - I bought a laptop to help me with my education and saved for a college course. The Newcomer Driver Education Program has special driver education classes and in-car training just for newcomers! I hope to use my licence to look for work. We were even able to get our taxes done!

Volunteer & Community Services Program

I really wanted to find a job in Canada so I started volunteering at IRCOM as a Tenant Leader. In our first year at IRCOM, we were paired with a Canadian family who met with us many times for fun activities. Our children played together and we were able to learn about each other's cultures. We learned a lot of useful tips about living and working in Canada and we remain friends still today!

Nurturing Indigenous - Newcomer Relations

Common Ground, Stronger Voices


When I first arrived in Canada, I knew very little about the history of this country. In my English classes, I began to learn about treaties and Canada's relationship with the first peoples of this land. In the summer, IRCOM had community barbecues in our courtyard where I got to meet my neighbours that I had never spoken with before! I learned so many new things and realised we have a lot in common. I love learning about Indigenous cultures and sharing stories about my history too!

Newcomer Literacy Initiative

Learning English is one of the main goals in our settlement plan. I am able to attend my half-day classes at IRCOM and at a nearby school (Hugh John Macdonald) while my children are in child care right on site. This is a great opportunity for our whole family and will help my wife and I find jobs soon!

Child Care Program

I was worried that I could not start English classes without anyone to watch my two-year-old son. Then I learned that IRCOM has a Child Care Program that my son can attend while I am attending classes and programs. He loves his friends in Child Care, and many staff speak our language. They are like family to him! He is also learning English and his numbers, I'm so proud of him!



“A lack of stable housing is correlated with more marginalized social networks, higher rates of unemployment, inability to build assets and meet other needs, increased stress, and a longer and more difficult integration process overall. In other words, without adequate housing as the cornerstone, the entire structure of settlement is put at risk” (Francis and Hiebert, 2014, p. 64).



‘They Can Live a Life Here’

Current and Past Tenants’
Experiences with IRCOM’s
Model of Housing and
Wrap-Around Supports

By Jill Bucklaschuk

JANUARY
2019



Tenant Quotes from the CCPA Report

“IRCOM life was amazing. [It] was like a small world in one place. There are so many cultures, so many nationalities, so many different people together. It’s like you live [on] another planet!” — Anthony

“I never feel lonely here or by myself” — Salma, through an interpreter.

“[It is] very easy to live in IRCOM. I see many of our community people, they live direct outside [and] they got a lot of problems. I think we were very lucky to get to live in IRCOM, though, for a very short time. It was very perfect and there we [learned] many, many things, too.” — Jigme

National Housing Strategy

IRCOM's National Housing Strategy/CMHC funded research project is well underway. It is examining housing and wrap-around success and key indicators that demonstrate settlement and integration success for newcomers to Canada.

This data enables us to know more about what outcomes we believe are important and produce compelling information about the effectiveness of IRCOM's model.



One of the disturbing elements of our attitude toward people across the wall is that it's much easier to think of giving them a gift than according them a right.- Michael Ignatieff



How it can be replicated

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykNt6ra8O2E&feature=youtu.be>

Conditions:

1. Partnership of non-profit, IRCC, and Province / jurisdiction.
2. Community investment in the building as well as holistic wrap-around programs, and services.
3. The building itself requires adequate space on the main floor for a classroom, community space, community kitchen, and offices.
4. Diverse communities in residence

Resources / Additional Information

IRCOM Website: www.ircom.ca

IRCOM Twitter: @ircominc

IRCOM Youtube: Search IRCOM INC.

IRCOM Instagram: ircominc

Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives – Three year research findings:

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/they-can-live-life-here>

