

International Student Orientation HANDBOOK



Welcome to Manitoba

You are about to begin a wonderful learning experience in Manitoba, Canada. You have contacted a school or school division, signed your commitment to study, and made plans to travel here and stay in a private home, residence or dormitory. This Orientation Handbook has been prepared to help you get the most out of your time in Manitoba. Reading this handbook will help you to be ready to learn and enjoy your stay in our province and our country.

This Orientation Handbook is divided into three sections, each containing information necessary during your time in Manitoba:

- Academic Life – what you can expect in your studies at your school;
- Student Life – an introduction to life outside the classroom as an international student in Canada; and
- Canadian Culture and Community – introduction to some aspects of Canadian society.

In addition to reading this Orientation Handbook, we urge you to read any other material sent to you by your school or school division. Become familiar with the rules and policies at your educational institution. If you are taking part in a Homestay program – in which you will stay in a family's home during your time in Manitoba – read the Homestay or boarding guide sent to you by your school or division.

When you arrive at your school in Manitoba, staff of the school or school division will be pleased to help you. Many school divisions have full-time international student advisors who work with international students. In some smaller school divisions teachers are assigned to help international students. If you are unsure of any material in this handbook, make a note of it and ask your teacher or international student advisor.

We wish you a happy, healthy, productive and highly educational experience in Manitoba, Canada.



Academic Life

1 School or Division Orientation and Tour

Most international students will have a chance to become familiar with your Manitoba school or division* during a school orientation and tour. This is a very important event, so make sure that you attend, pay attention and ask questions if there are things you do not understand. The tour includes location of study spaces, administrative office, guidance and resource area, and where you may go during spares or free periods. Your school may assign lockers, explain the class timetable and calendar of school year, and or introduce you to staff and student council members during this Orientation event.

2 Student Government

Manitoba high schools usually have a council elected by the students, which organizes social activities, charity fund-raising events, and special activities. International students are free to get involved in student government by running for election or volunteering to help organize activities. This is another good way to meet Canadian students, learn about Canada and practice your English. Some schools will have a special student council position for international students.

3 Daily Routine and Schedule.

Schools in Manitoba have classes Monday to Friday from early September until the end of June. Schools are closed during public holidays and for two weeks in late December and early January (including Christmas and New Year's Day) and one week in late March (Spring Break). In addition to these closings, classes are cancelled for 10 days per year on days when teachers are preparing report cards, conducting interviews with parents and taking part in professional development. The typical day in a Manitoba high school will be seven hours long, including one hour for lunch. School days are divided into four or five classes, usually 60 or 75 minutes each. Students will have a variety of different classes in subject areas such as English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Physical Education and Art. Each class will be taught in a different classroom and students will move from room to room throughout the day with a short period of time between each class. School bells ring to indicate the beginning and end of the day and the end of each class period. The school day begins with the playing of Canada's national anthem, *O Canada*. During the singing of *O Canada*, students are required to stand and avoid speaking to one another. There may be announcements over the school's public address system at the beginning of the day. A few times each year, schools will have fire drills. At this time, a fire alarm will sound and the staff and students will practise exiting the building safely.

** Public education in Manitoba is overseen by a provincial government department, which sets goals and policies. Schools are owned and operated and teachers are employed by school divisions located in communities throughout Manitoba, which may include several or dozens of individual schools. Policies for international students at private schools in Manitoba are usually set by the individual schools. Policies for international students at public schools are usually set at the school division level. Most school divisions that recruit international students will have specialized staff members at the divisional level who work with international students.*

4 Attendance (Absences and Lateness):

You need to attend your classes in order to be successful in your studies. Please ensure you know your daily schedule and learn the location of your classrooms. Missing too many classes can result in failing to understand the material you need to learn. If you miss classes you may be required to show cause and present a note from your guardian or homestay parent. Arriving late to class is not acceptable and frequent lateness may lead to disciplinary action.

5 Registration, Course Selection and Change

The Manitoba Department of Education has established rules for teaching high school course curriculum. Certain courses are required at the various grade levels in middle school and high school and some courses are optional. All students must register for these courses at school. However, registration times and procedures vary from school to school; therefore you should ask your school or division when you need to register and what courses are available. Additional fees for equipment and supplies may be required for some courses.

6 Academic Programs

The Manitoba Department of Education requires students to earn at least 28 credits to graduate from high school. The government sets out required courses, in subjects such as English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies and physical education, and a wide range of optional courses. Students choose their own optional courses based on their own interests, abilities and career goals. Options include additional courses in the required study areas, as well as courses in the arts, technical and vocational education, and other languages. A wide range of courses are offered in Manitoba high schools, although not all courses are available at any individual school. Some schools offer specialized programs for students who are interested in training in a specific career, or who want to do advanced studies. You may wish to find out about any of these alternative programs at your school. Please note that some programs have special entrance requirements.

7 Semester Structure

Most high schools in Manitoba use a semester system, which divides the school year into two parts. In schools that follow the semester system, a student will take 3 to 5 courses during the first semester, from September to January, and a selection of courses in the second semester, from February to June. In the semester system, report cards are sent out four times per year, usually at the middle and the end of each semester. In schools that are not on the semester system courses run from September to June. In most schools that are not on the semester system students will take 8 to 10 courses at a time and will have different courses on alternating days. Report cards are sent three or four times per year, depending on the school. Report cards will be sent to the student's parents in their home country. Parent-teacher interviews are also held at report card time so that parents may ask questions about their child's progress. Homestay parents are invited to parent-teacher interviews so that they can support their international student in their studies.

8 Language Knowledge

A certain skill level in English may be necessary for students to be able to learn in some courses. Your school may limit which courses you can take based on your ability to read and write in English. Some courses are designated with an “E”, which means that they are suitable for students who speak English as an additional language (EAL). In these classes, students are evaluated for their knowledge of the subject, and will not lose marks for their limited English language skills. In addition to working hard in your English classes, there are many things you can do to develop your knowledge of the language. These include using your English dictionary to look up words; reading English-language books, magazines and newspapers; watching English television; asking questions; and visiting EAL tutors. Do not be embarrassed about speaking with your homestay parents, as they can help you become more comfortable with the language.

9 Resources and Supports

If you need help, ask for it. Studying far from your home in a language that may be new to you can be difficult. Your school or division has many professional staff members who can help you with academic or emotional needs. Do not hesitate to speak with your classroom teachers about difficulties you are experiencing in their course. Not only will they have some useful recommendations, they will usually be happy to see that you are taking control of your learning needs and getting involved with the course content. Resource teachers and education assistants can help you with academic subjects that are difficult. Guidance counsellors can help you select courses, deal with academic problems or cope with feelings of sadness or homesickness. Your school’s International Student Program staff are also an important resource if you have any concerns with your studies or with living in Manitoba. The friends you make during your time here and your Homestay parents can also help you enjoy your time in our province. There are many other resources you can use as well. Make sure to get an English dictionary and use it to look up unfamiliar words.

10 Grading and Assessment

Students’ grades are derived from a variety of learning experiences that are assessed by provincially certified teachers. Students are assessed through exams, tests, individual assignments, group projects and classroom presentations. Students in grade 12 take standardized provincial exams in mathematics and English language arts. These exams count for 30 per cent of the student’s marks in those subjects. Teachers will explain how students will be graded in each course and what mark will be required to pass. Schools for middle years (grade 7 and 8) and high school (grade 9 to 12) issue students marks as a percentage on their report cards. Some schools use letters (A, B, C, D, F), with A as the highest mark when grading student assignments. The normal minimum passing mark is 50 per cent (or a letter D on assignments). Manitoba teachers use a variety of teaching methods that are student-centred. Student-centred education means the student learns through solving problems and making discoveries. In this kind of learning, students may participate in group discussions, work on group projects, and give presentations to the class.

11 Graduation

Manitoba Education requires a minimum of 28 high school credits for graduation. Each credit requires 110 hours of instruction. University or college entrance requires a high school diploma with specific courses. Your school's or division's guidance counsellors can help explain what courses you will require for graduation or to enter university or college. International students coming to Manitoba part way through high school will have an assessment done on their previous education. This will determine how many credits they will need in order to graduate from high school in Manitoba. High school graduation in Canada is usually a time of celebration. Most schools organize a formal convocation ceremony and a dinner and dance for graduates.

12 School-Sponsored Extracurricular Activities

Extra-curricular school activities are an important part of the Canadian school experience. The term "extra-curricular" means that these activities are not part of the required course of study, but they can be very educational, especially for a student who wants to improve his or her English language skills. Activities vary greatly from school to school, and include a large variety of sports, drama, music, clubs, and committees. There may be extra fees required for some activities. Students may need permission from their parents. Find out what opportunities there are at your school and what you need to do to participate in these activities.

13 Field Trips

Trips away from school may be taken as a part of an academic course or for extra-curricular reasons such as to take part in a sports event. Rules for field trips are required to ensure safety. Schools may have a code of conduct for field trips, which all students are required to follow. Field trips may be for part of a school day or may be overnight trips. Generally, to participate in a field trip, a student must have a permission form and/or waiver signed by his or her legal parents. A waiver is a legal document that states that the person signing is aware of the potential dangers of what he or she is agreeing to do. For example, before a child can go on a school's ski trip, the parent or guardian would sign a waiver stating that he or she is aware of the potential dangers of skiing. There may also be extra fees for participating in some field trips. Field trips can be an excellent way for international students to see more of Manitoba outside of their school and homestay home.

14 Rules, Procedures and Expectations

All schools have rules on subjects such as attendance, lateness, cheating and student conduct. Schools expect students to follow these rules. Schools have disciplinary procedures in place for students who fail to do so. Some rules vary from one school or division to another, so you must learn what rules apply at your school. You can expect that you will be required to attend class

on time. You will be expected to use English in class. You will be responsible to complete your school work, both in school and as homework after school. You will be responsible to do your own work, without plagiarizing. Plagiarizing means claiming somebody else's work as one's own. It is plagiarism to copy writing from a book, the internet or another student and claim to have written it oneself. Other examples of cheating include passing answers in exams and tests or submitting an essay that has been purchased through the internet. Penalties for cheating vary depending on the severity of the case, but can include failure in the course and expulsion from school. School and division rules also deal with distractions in the classroom, such as socializing, music players, mobile telephones, and electronic devices. Most schools have a written Code of Conduct with rules for ensuring that the school is a safe place where students feel respected and able to learn. In most of the schools where internet access is available, you will be expected to abide by a policy on acceptable usage of internet. Make sure that you know what these rules are before attempting to access internet sites that might be unacceptable under the policy.

15 Dress Code

Many schools in Manitoba have a dress code that sets out rules for appropriate clothing to be worn at school. At many private schools a school uniform is required. Public schools generally have rules against wearing clothing with offensive wording, revealing clothing, or wearing hats indoors. Schools also require proper exercise clothing and shoes for Physical Education class. These rules vary from school to school, so learn the rules at your school.

16 Academic Misconduct

All schools have policies on academic misconduct and have penalties for misconduct ranging from a warning, to a temporary suspension, to expulsion from school. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism (which means claiming that somebody else's work is your own) and cheating, such as passing or copying answers in an exam. Your school's policy on academic misconduct will be explained to you. It is important to understand this policy, so please ask questions if you are unsure.

17 Penalties

School and divisions have rules governing subjects such as regular attendance, lateness, proper dress, safe and respectful conduct and academic integrity. These rules are enforced with a variety of penalties. Penalties vary depending on the offence, but can include expulsion from school and the International Student Program. Find out what the rules are at your school or division and do your best to follow them. Rules and discipline are intended to create a safe and productive environment for all students.

Student Life

1 Homework, Assignments, Studying, Tutoring

Learning for Canadian students does not only take place in school or during the school day. Teachers assign homework regularly. Assignments will be due on a specific day, known as a “deadline.” Deadlines are usually not flexible and penalties are given for late assignments. Schools have study halls and libraries where students can work on assignments or study for tests. School libraries may be open outside of normal school hours. Public libraries in Winnipeg and many other Manitoba communities are also a good place to do homework. Most schools have access to tutors.

2 Lifestyle and Friendship

Education is important, but it’s important to have other things in life in addition to school work. Making friends and taking time for recreation allows you to balance your lifestyle. Clubs, sports and activities will be organized at school. You will have more energy to learn and you will find your English improves more rapidly if you take part in recreation with your fellow students or in the community.

3 Canadian Students, Attitudes and Behaviour

Canada is a diverse country. Your Canadian classmates may have a wide variety of cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds. Generally, Canadians are accepting of differences and may show interest in learning about another person’s culture or country of origin. Canadians are generally casual in dress and manners. Canadian attitudes and behaviours may be different from those you are accustomed to in your home country. This can lead to a feeling called “culture shock.” Understanding cultural differences is the best way to prevent “culture shock.” For example, some international students find that Canadians seem reserved and quiet. Other international students find Canadian students to be more talkative and willing to discuss personal matters than they are accustomed to. You may find that Canadians have different attitudes about “personal space” than you are used to in your home country. “Personal space” refers to the distance people normally keep between themselves and other people when talking, sitting or standing in line. You may find that Canadians are uncomfortable talking about personal matters, such as religion, politics or income, unless they know a person very well. It is often easy to begin a conversation by asking about hockey, Canada’s natural attractions, the weather or popular culture such as music, movies or television.

4 Dating and Romantic Relationships

Except in some private schools, boys and girls attend classes together in Manitoba high schools. Supervised school dances are held in most Manitoba schools. Unsupervised socializing among boys and girls is common in Canadian culture, although most Canadian parents try to limit the

amount and kind of socializing. Mixed groups of boys and girls often go to parties, movies or other events together. Some teenagers will go on “dates,” in which one couple will go alone to a movie, restaurant or dance. Some high-school age boys and girls will have “boyfriends” or “girlfriends” and will hold hands and display affection in public. Other young Canadians only begin dating after their high school years. Guidance counsellors, homestay parents and international student program staff can help you if you have questions or concerns about dating or romantic relationships.

5 Safety

Canada is a safe country by international standards. Well-trained police and fire departments, safely designed and built roads, brightly lit streets, and high-quality building construction mean that danger from crime, fire and accident is reduced. However, international students should still take steps to protect themselves and their belongings during their stay in Manitoba. By preparing in advance and discussing safety with your homestay parents and school or division staff, you will be in a better position to do something if an unexpected problem occurs. The following steps should help to keep you safe.

- a. Get to know your fellow students, staff at your school or division and your homestay parents.
- b. Pay attention to your belongings.
- c. Only carry a small amount of cash with you when you go out, and keep your passport safe at your residence.
- d. Know where you are going and how you will get there and discuss your plans with your homestay parents.
- e. When you go out, go out with friends.
- f. Never get into a car with a driver who has been drinking alcohol.
- g. Do not hesitate to say “stop” if somebody is bothering you or encouraging you to do something you do not want to do.
- h. Remember that the emergency telephone number for police, fire department or medical emergencies is 911. Other emergency numbers can be found on the last page of this handbook, make sure that you always keep it close for quick reference.
- i. Remember that in Canada, the police are there to protect and help all people.

6 Lodging Options, Expectations and Responsibilities

At some schools international students will stay in a school residence. In most schools or divisions, international students will stay with a local family called a homestay family. Most schools or divisions will have a booklet called a Homestay Guide or a Boarding Guide, which will explain the rules for living with a homestay family. Homestay guides cover a wide variety of topics and are intended to ensure that both international students and the families they stay with enjoy their experience. International students are required to read their homestay or boarding guide.

7 Responsibilities of a Homestay Family Member

International students staying with a homestay family will be provided with a private bedroom and meals. A homestay home is not a hotel. The goal of the homestay program is for students to be treated like members of their family. Students are responsible to keep their room clean and to pick up after themselves throughout the house. Students may share a bathroom with other family members. Keep the bathroom clean and do not use all the hot water during your bath or shower. Students are required to follow rules for telephone and computer use. Internet rules also apply. Be sure to ask the homestay family what these rules are. Most Canadian families make an effort to eat healthy, nutritious meals both at home and when they bring a lunch to school. Many families are busy, with both parents working, and so frozen prepared meals are a common food for many Canadians. It is customary for students to prepare their own lunch to take to school. Families also try to have at least one meal during the day as a family. If this is the case with your homestay family, find out what the schedule is and what will be expected of you.

8 Computer and Telephone

For students studying far from home, computer and telephone connections are an important way of keeping in contact with family and friends. Email is very useful, because it allows regular communication without the expense of long distance telephone calls. Students staying with a homestay family must follow their homestay family's rules on computer and telephone use. There may be time limits on student use of a family computer and rules on what types of websites may or may not be acceptable for viewing. Students who spend too much time on-line with friends and family in their home country will not have as much time to learn in Manitoba. Long distance telephone calls home are the student's expense and must be made or received at a time that is suitable to the homestay family. Be aware of the difference in time zones. This material will be covered in a school's or division's homestay guide. Telephone numbers in Manitoba are written as seven digits, like this: 555-1234. All telephone numbers in Manitoba have the same area code: 204. If you are calling a telephone number in the same community in Manitoba, you do not need to use the area code. If you are calling a number in Manitoba outside of your community, you will need to dial 1 + 204 and then dial the seven-digit number of the person you are calling. Telephone numbers are listed in a telephone directory, available in homes, businesses, and telephone booths. You can also dial 411 to find a local telephone number, or 1 + 204 + 555-1212 to find a telephone number in another community in Manitoba. If you need to make a telephone call from a telephone booth, you will need a 25 cent Canadian coin. You do not need money to dial 911, the emergency telephone number throughout Canada and the United States, or 411.

9 Making Social Plans

Socializing is a part of student life. Social activity allows for a balanced lifestyle and will give an international student the opportunity to improve his or her English skills and learn more about Canadian society. Students often make plans for upcoming weekends during breaks at school. Make plans in advance and make sure to discuss your plans with your homestay family. Your homestay or boarding guide may discuss this further. Remember to let your homestay family know where you plan to go and when you will return, and make sure to ask for permission.

10 Curfews

Many schools and divisions set a curfew for international students, which requires that after a specific time at night they remain at their homestay home or residence. In many cases, the curfew will be earlier on Sunday to Thursday night, to ensure that students are able to get a full night's sleep before school. The curfew also ensures that homestay students will not disturb their homestay families with late nights. Find out what the rules are in your school or division by reading your homestay or boarding guide.

11 Identification

Keep your passport in a safe place at your residence or homestay home. It is a good idea to have a copy of your passport and carry it with you. Keep your health insurance card with you at all times in case of emergency. Please note that in Canada, it is against the law to carry false identification. Consequences for carrying false identification can be severe, including a jail sentence, a fine and being deported back home.

12 Medical Issues

International students in Manitoba must have health insurance through the Manitoba International Students Health Insurance Plan. To learn what services are covered by this plan, ask your school or division. We advise you to keep your health insurance* card with you during your program. If you are under 18 years old, your parents must sign a Custodian Declaration for you to study in Manitoba. This Custodian Declaration allows your school or division to have legal responsibility for you while you are in Manitoba. If you are ill or injured and need emergency treatment, your school or division will be able to consent to the treatment for you. This Custodian Declaration expires when you turn 18. At the age of 18 you will be considered an adult by Canadian law and will be able to consent to your own medical treatment. The Custodian Declaration also expires at the end of the school year. If you remain in Canada to travel during the summer, your school will no longer be responsible for you. If you have a medical condition, make sure that your school or division knows in case of an emergency.

** Travel health insurance policies vary greatly. Make sure that you have enough medical insurance coverage and take the time to learn the details of your insurance package. For example, students should find out if they will be required to pay upfront for medical treatment or if their insurer will pay for their treatment immediately. This is particularly important for students who take part in activities such as playing hockey, football, skiing, scuba diving, and white water rafting, which may be considered high risk and not be covered by the travel health insurance policy.*

13 Banking and Money Issues

You will need a safe place to keep your money and a way to get access to it while you are in Manitoba. Your homestay family can help you make contact with a bank in order to establish a bank account here. Many Canadians use bank cards to make their purchases, which saves them from needing to carry large amounts of cash. If you are in Manitoba for a short visit you may not find it necessary to open a bank account. You may be able to use your bank card to withdraw money from your bank account in your home country. It is a good idea to set a budget and keep to it. Calculate the cost of regular expenses, such as a bus pass. Remember that sales taxes are added to the sale price of most goods and services. In Manitoba we have two taxes to pay, federal (Good and Services Tax –GST– 6%) and provincial (Provincial Sales Tax –PST– 7%). For example, if you buy an article that is marked for \$10.00, you will pay the following:

\$10.00	original price
0.70	7% PST
0.60	6% GST
Total of \$11.30	

Also, allow a moderate amount for socializing and sightseeing. Keep in mind that spending a large amount of time in recreational activities may not only cost a lot of money, but can also interfere with your study time. Carrying large amounts of cash is not recommended as it can attract undesirable attention. Do not allow other people to talk you into buying their meals or paying their admission to events. When going out in the evening, only take as much money as you expect you will need (for example, \$10-\$15 will pay for a movie and snacks) plus another \$20 as emergency money, in case you need to take a taxi back.

14 Driving

To drive in Manitoba you must be at least 16 years old and legally licensed to drive. Under Manitoba's new graduated licence rules, young drivers have special restrictions on where and when they can drive. Many school and divisions do not allow international students to drive during their time in Manitoba, even if they are old enough to obtain a driver's licence. Driver education classes are offered at many high schools in Manitoba. Find out what the rules for international students are at your school or division. For information on Manitoba's driving laws and licensing, visit the website of Manitoba Public Insurance (www.mpi.mb.ca), click the word "welcome" and then click on "driver licensing." If you are travelling as a passenger with another driver, remember that Manitoba law requires all passengers to wear a seatbelt. Remember that you should never get in a vehicle with a driver who has been drinking alcohol.

15 Travel in Canada

You may plan to travel within North America during your time here. Your school or division will have rules about overnight travel during your stay. You will need written permission from your legal parents for any overnight trips and you will need to discuss your travel plans with your homestay parents. Your travel plans must not interfere with your time to attend school and study. If you plan to travel within the United States, make sure that you have the necessary visa and identification, including your passport. If you are interested in any overnight trips, discuss the rules with staff from the International Student Program.

16 Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco

In Manitoba 18 is the minimum legal age to drink alcohol or to enter bars, lounges and nightclubs where alcohol is sold. It is also the minimum age to purchase tobacco. It is illegal to use false identification to buy alcohol or tobacco. International students who violate these rules may be expelled from the International Student Program and returned to their home countries. Some international student programs prohibit drinking of alcohol for students of all ages. Your school's homestay or boarding guide will explain the rules. Also, the use of illegal drugs will also result in an international student being returned to their home country. Using illegal drugs or underage drinking alcohol can result in criminal charges.

Canadian Community and Culture

1 Climate and Clothing

Manitoba is a northern province with a climate type known as Continental. This means that our province has four distinct seasons: winter, spring, summer and fall. Late summer and early fall, when the school year begins, is a period of cool evenings and usually warm days. Snow and freezing weather usually arrive in November and remain until late March or early April. During the coldest periods of winter, temperatures can reach minus 35 Celsius and feel even colder because of the effect of wind chill*. However, winter in Manitoba is usually sunny and bright, and many Manitobans find that with appropriate clothing, this is an enjoyable season. Appropriate winter clothing includes an insulated hat that covers the ears, insulated gloves or mitts, a thick windproof jacket known as a parka, a sweater, and warm, insulated boots. For outside activity during the winter, long underwear and snow pants are strongly advised. You may not be able to buy clothing in your home country that is warm enough for a Manitoba winter. In this case, plan to buy a parka, boots, hat and gloves when you come to Manitoba. They are available at any major clothing store and your homestay parents will be able to help you find what you need. As our school year starts in September (early fall) dressing for the cold is necessary to prevent frostbite (the freezing of body tissue – which can be quite painful) or hypothermia (a lowering of the body's temperature – which can be dangerous if not treated). Temperatures begin warming in March. Spring can bring mild weather, and often rain showers, so umbrellas and rain jackets are a good idea. Summer temperatures in June, July and August can reach the mid 30s (Celsius). Many Manitobans dress casually in shorts and short-sleeved shirts during the hot months. Remember to use sunscreen and a hat to prevent sunburn, which can lead to skin cancer. Occasionally hot days will lead to powerful thunderstorms. Mosquitoes can be a nuisance in Manitoba during warm, moist summers so students are advised to use mosquito repellent if they are outside during the peak mosquito times of day (evening and night) or taking part in outdoor activities such as hiking or canoeing. Your homestay parents will be able to advise you on how to dress for Manitoba's climate.

2 Maps and Community

Your school or division will provide you with material such as city maps, bus schedules and bus route maps during your Orientation. Get to know the best way of getting from your homestay home to your school.

3 Transportation

Your school or division will provide you with information on the school bus if you need to take one to get from your homestay home to school. Manitoba's cities also have public transit bus systems that will provide you with options for getting to school, shopping or entertainment attractions. Monthly student bus passes are available and provide a discount if you are taking the bus regularly.

* (Wind chill is the cooling effect of the wind in combination with low temperatures. When it is windy, we feel colder.)

Public transit is safe and reliable in Manitoba cities. If you are travelling as a passenger in a motor vehicle, remember only to drive with a safe, licensed driver and never to get in a car with a driver who has been drinking alcohol or taking drugs. If you need to take a taxi, you will normally need to call a taxi company. Unlike larger cities, passengers are seldom able to wave down a taxi in Winnipeg or other Manitoba communities. Hotels, restaurants, shopping centres and other businesses often have telephones that connect free of charge directly to a taxi company. You may look in the Yellow Pages telephone directory under the heading “Taxicabs” to find a telephone number for a taxi. Smaller communities may not have taxicabs or buses available. Make sure that you know what your school’s or division’s policies are regarding international students and driving. Many schools and divisions do not allow international students to drive.

4 Recreation and Tourist Attractions

Manitobans are usually very eager to provide information on our province’s attractions. Travel Manitoba, located at The Forks — a prominent Winnipeg tourist attraction — has all the information you need on things to do and places to go in Manitoba. To find out about Manitoba’s attractions, visit the Travel Manitoba website at www.travelmanitoba.com. Your school or division will also have information on attractions and events. Your homestay family will be pleased to provide you with information as well. Historic sites such as Lower Fort Garry and The Forks; professional and amateur sports events; city, provincial and national parks; and natural areas are among Manitoba’s and Winnipeg’s attractions. Major attractions outside of Winnipeg include the beaches of Lake Winnipeg, the lakes and forests of Whiteshell Provincial Park and Riding Mountain National Park. National and Provincial Parks in Manitoba offer a wide range of services and facilities for year-round enjoyment. No matter what recreational activities you pursue, you are sure to enjoy our spectacular natural environments, unique cultural sites, sandy beaches and clear waters.

5 Places of Worship

Manitoba, like the rest of Canada, is a multi-faith society. People here have a wide variety of religious beliefs and generally consider that it is important to respect the religious beliefs of other people. Information on places of worship will be available from your school or division. Your homestay family may also be able to help you find a place of worship upon request.

6 Holidays

A calendar of the school year will be provided at the school’s Orientation event. This calendar will also include Canadian holidays. Keep in mind that on many Canadian holidays few services are available and only essential services, such as hospitals and emergency services, are open. Learning how Canadians celebrate holidays is an important part of your experience in Manitoba, and therefore as an international student you are encouraged to join your homestay family in these celebrations.

7 Cultural Centres

As a multicultural society, Manitoba has cultural centres that provide entertainment, education and support services for a wide variety of cultures. Information on these centres will be available from your school or division. Your homestay family may also be able to help you find a cultural centre.

8 Shopping Centres and Restaurants

Winnipeg and other Manitoba communities have a wide variety of stores in malls, downtown and neighbourhood shopping areas. A wide variety of restaurants offer fast food, casual and formal dining, serving food from many cultures. Information will be available from your school or division and your homestay family. It is customary to leave a tip when eating at restaurants where you are served by a waiter or waitress. Generally Canadians add 15% of the total amount of the bill (not including tax) as a tip; however, note that some restaurants add the tip amount to the bill before it is presented for payment. Usually there is no tipping at fast food or cafeteria-style restaurants, although some may have a tip jar.

9 Cultural Attractions and Events

The City of Winnipeg and Manitoba in general have a wide variety of attractions and festivals. An excellent way to learn more about Canada and to improve your knowledge of the English language is to experience our music, art, theatre, dance, and history. Famous cultural attractions in Winnipeg include the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Winnipeg Fringe Festival, the Manitoba Theatre Centre, Prairie Theatre Exchange, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Folklorama, Festival du Voyageur, the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Manitoba Museum. Special events across Manitoba include the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair and Manitoba Summer Fair in Brandon (focusing on Manitoba's agricultural heritage); the Dauphin CountryFest (showcasing the top country music performers in the world); the Manitoba Highland Gathering (a festival of Scottish heritage with dance, pipe and drum competitions, heavy games of brawn, sheep shearing and herding); the World Lily Festival (flower show) in Neepawa; the Manitoba Stampede and Exhibition (professional rodeo) in Morris, and the Manitoba Icelandic Festival in Gimli. Your school or division will have more information on attractions and events. Listings of cultural events are also available through the daily newspaper. Your homestay family will likely have their own favourite Manitoba attractions.

10 Becoming Comfortable with Canadian Culture

You will enjoy your time in Manitoba the most if you are aware of some facts about Canada's culture. This will ensure that you get along well with your homestay family, your classmates, and your teachers and in general, Canadian people you meet.

- a. **Homestay and boarding issues** – Rules to follow with your homestay family will be set out in your homestay or boarding guide. International students and their homestay families are expected to treat each other with courtesy and respect. Spending time with your homestay family, speaking English with them, involving them when you make plans, sharing in household responsibilities and following rules governing the telephone, computer and curfew will ensure that you and your homestay family have a positive experience.
- b. **Communication** – Open and clear communication is the best way to avoid misunderstandings. You are encouraged to ask teachers, homestay families and other people questions. If you do not understand an answer, it is very acceptable to ask for an explanation. Generally, communication in Canada is informal. A simple “hello,” “good morning” or “how are you?” is a common greeting. Unless you are speaking to a health professional, family member or close friend, the person who asks “how are you?” is not usually asking about your health. Normally Canadians will respond to “how are you?” with a simple “fine, thanks.” In conversations most Canadians prefer to make eye contact while talking. There are some cultures within Canada in which people do not make direct eye contact. If you are still learning English and have trouble finding the right word, do not worry. Most Canadians will be pleased to help you find the word you need.
- c. **Privacy and personal boundaries** – Canadians generally value their privacy and personal space. Many Canadians are uncomfortable talking about personal matters such as family, income, and religion unless they know a person well. Canadians also like to keep a physical distance between themselves and other people as a form of respect and politeness.
- d. **Roles of men and women** – In Canada roles of men and women are less strongly defined or widely followed than in the past. That means women may work in positions that traditionally were thought of as “men’s work” and men may work in positions that traditionally were thought of as “women’s work.” In some households, men do much of the work at home, such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children while women work outside the home. You may see this in your homestay family. You may also see these changed roles for men and women at your school and any place you go. There are many women in management positions in Canadian society. Women play many sports – such as ice hockey – that traditionally were considered men’s sports.
- e. **Class Issues** – Canada is a democratic society and all members of the society are to be treated with respect, whether highly educated professionals or workers in the service industry. Very few Canadians employ maids; therefore, all members of the family are expected to share the chores around the house. Canadian workplaces are often casual. Supervisors and their employees often speak to one another by their first name, instead of saying “Mr.” and “Mrs.” At school, however, all students are expected to address teachers and principals using their last name and a title such as Mr., Ms. or Mrs. (The term Ms. is

a relatively recent creation that is used for a woman who is married or unmarried, just as Mr. is used for men who are married or unmarried. Some women prefer to be addressed as Ms. and others prefer Mrs.) Some older adults, such as homestay parents, let young people address them by their first names and some prefer the more formal style of address. Find out which style your homestay parents prefer. Many schools and divisions may discuss these issues in their homestay or boarding guides.

- f. **Personal grooming and hygiene** – Most Canadians shower every day, usually in the morning before school or work. Canadians also shower after exercising. If you are taking a Physical Education class, you may find that the students are expected to shower before their next class begins. Public swimming pools require all swimmers to shower before entering the pool. Most Canadian homes have machines for washing and drying clothing and so most Canadians wash their clothing regularly (especially in hot weather). In matters of grooming, such as hair styles and facial hair, Canadians follow a variety of tastes and fashions. There will likely be a hair stylist near your school or your homestay home. Most hairstylists serve both male and female customers.

11 Canadian Slang

The English that you learn in the classroom may differ slightly from the English your classmates speak. That is because new slang (casual speech) expressions are continually created. The best way to learn to speak English is to combine your classroom studies with lots of casual conversation. Your school or division will have English as an Additional Language (EAL) professionals who can help you.

12 Ethnic Food Grocers and Restaurants

Information on ethnic grocers and restaurants will be available from your school or division.

Summary

Your time in Manitoba will be very educational and rewarding. You will make new friends, try new experiences and learn about different cultures. You will also work hard and there will be times when you feel homesick, tired and confused. You can make your time here a positive experience by asking for help, seeking information and learning to understand Canadian society.

We all want to make sure that your time in Manitoba is happy and productive. Your teachers and the staff of the International Student Program, your fellow students and your homestay parents want you to enjoy your time in Manitoba. They want you to feel comfortable here.

Use the information in this handbook, along with your homestay or boarding guide, to help you learn and grow, both as a student and as a human being.

Have a wonderful time!

Emergency contacts

EMERGENCY (Medical, Fire, Police, Poison Treatment, etc.)

Call 911

If you call 911, trained emergency operators will ask you for your full name, address and type of emergency and will send the appropriate emergency service.

Your local school or school division

Your school or division will have designated emergency contacts for international students. For information specific to your school or division, call the school principal or your school division's student services administrator.

Emergency counseling and support

A variety of agencies in Manitoba have telephone lines where trained staff can provide advice, information or support for young people undergoing emotional, personal or health difficulties.

To talk about a problem, contact:

Teen Touch (24 hr Hotline for Teens)

Winnipeg: 783-1116

Toll free: 1-800-563-8336

Online: <http://www.teentouch.org/>

Kids Help Phone (24 hr Bilingual Hotline for Kids)

Toll free: 1-800-668-6868

Online: <http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/en/>

Klinic Crisis Line (24 hr Hotline)

Winnipeg: 786-8686

Toll free: 1-888-322-3019

Facts of Life Line (24 hr Hotline)

Winnipeg: 982-7800

Toll free: 1-800-432-1957

Online: www.serc.mb.ca

email: thefactsoflife@serc.mb.ca

Youth Emergency Crisis Stabilization System

(24 hr telephone counselling, mobile crisis team, community resource referrals)

Winnipeg: 949-4777

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba - Youth Services

This is a service that provides advice and referrals to people who have problems with alcohol, drug or other addictions.

Winnipeg: 944-6235 (also provides contacts for outside Winnipeg)

Smokers Help Line

This is a free, confidential, service that provides personalized support, advice and information about quitting smoking

Telephone: 1-877-513-5333

Online: <http://www.smokershelpline.ca/>

Youth Resource Centre (24 hr)

This is an emergency shelter for young people. The Youth Resource Centre also offers emergency counseling.

Winnipeg: 477-1804

For further information about student support and safety issues, contact:

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth

Program and Student Services Branch

School Support Unit

Telephone: 1-204-945-8867

Toll free: 1-800-282-8069, extension 8867

Online: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/specedu>

Useful Websites

Before you come to Manitoba, you may want to find out more about our province and our people.

These websites may be able to help you prepare for your time here.

Government of Manitoba information for international students

www.education-excellence.ca

This government of Manitoba website contains information about study options and international education in the province. For more details about the education system and EAL/ESL programs in Manitoba, please refer to "A Handbook for International Students. An Overview of Education in Manitoba" <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/intstudents/index.html>

Government of Canada information for international students

www.cic.gc.ca/english/study

This Government of Canada website contains information on visas, study permits and other subjects.

Attractions and things to see and do:

www.travelmanitoba.com

Travel Manitoba is the Manitoba government department that distributes information about tourism and travel in our province.

Communities in Manitoba

www.communityprofiles.mb.ca

This website is maintained by the Manitoba Government. It provides information about large and small communities all over Manitoba. If you are considering studying in a community other than Winnipeg, the capital of Manitoba, this may be a useful website to visit.

Safety for young people in Canada

www.safecanada.ca/youth_e.asp

This is a Government of Canada website with safety advice for young people. Topics include bullying, crime, drugs, driving, school safety, and safety in sports and games.

School or Division Contacts

International students and their parents, guardians and homestay families can contact a variety of professionals.

If you have questions or difficulties, you may speak to an English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher, classroom teacher, counsellor, principal, or someone else in the school that you trust.

School counsellors may be especially helpful to students in planning their educational programming. Counsellors can

- give information on many academic and personal topics
- make changes to timetables
- help students plan for the future (e.g., careers, post-secondary studies)
- advise or refer students to another agency when they have personal problems or other concerns

Other Useful contacts

Winnipeg Police Non-Emergency calls: 986-6222

Winnipeg Transit Information

Customer relations 986-5694

Schedules and maps 986-5700

Telebus (Automated schedule information) 287-7433

To access this information you will need the bus stop number and the 2-digit bus route.

Handi-Transit 986-5722

Speak to a customer service representative for registrations, bookings and general inquiries.

Online: <http://winnipegtransit.com/main/index.jsp>

Brandon, Manitoba's second-largest city, has its own police department and transit system.

If you are planning to study in Brandon, keep these telephone numbers.

Brandon Police non-emergency calls: 729-2345

Brandon Transit Service schedule and route information: 729-2300

Online: <http://city.brandon.mb.ca/main.nsf/Pages+by+ID/263>

Royal Canadian Mounted Police non-emergency calls: 983-5420

The RCMP are the police in most smaller cities and towns in Manitoba. If you need to speak to the RCMP in your community about a non-emergency matter, call the office in the community where you are staying.

The following small cities and towns have their own local police departments:

Morden Police non-emergency calls: 822-6292

Winkler Police non-emergency calls: 325-0829



Study Manitoba School Divisions

For more information, please contact either:

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