



PORTRAIT OF NIAGARA'S FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY



A Force for Action

Be immersed | Be informed | Be inspired

bonjourniagara.com

Foreword

This community portrait was created thanks to the **Francophone Community Grants Program**. This report aims to increase awareness and build the capacity of Francophone organizations in the Niagara region.

Statistics Canada data from the 2016 population census as well as other data were used to describe the characteristics and strengths of the region's Francophone population.

Venture Niagara, a Community Futures Development Agency, spearheads the *Bonjour Niagara* project and works in partnership with the awareness committee, part of the *Table interagence du Niagara*, an informal inter-agency roundtable created from several community forums, the latest of which, *Rendez-Vous Niagara*, took place in 2015.



While certain initiatives identified the needs and challenges faced by the Francophone community, the *Bonjour Niagara* campaign seeks to highlight the accomplishments of the community in Niagara. *Bonjour Niagara* aims to

celebrate and promote an understanding of Niagara's Francophone population among the public at large. It also seeks to better serve both long term and newly-arrived Francophone residents in the region.

The portrait underlines the rich history and cultural diversity of the region's Francophone population. This community profile is meant to be an all-inclusive rallying effort and a snapshot of who we are.

INTER-AGENCY ROUNDTABLE OF NIAGARA

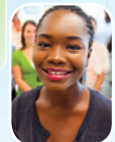
Le rendez-vous



Economic
Development &
Culture



Education &
Youth



Immigration



Health &
Seniors

This inter-agency roundtable is composed of more than **35** Francophone and Anglophone non-profit agencies that provide French language services in the Niagara region. A few governmental agencies from different sectors are also members and actively participate in community development activities.

Portrait of Niagara's Francophone Community - 2018

Acknowledgements

This report was made possible with the financial support of the Office of Francophone Affairs, Venture Niagara / Community Futures Development Corporation, ABC Communautaire, La Boîte à soleil, Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara, Niagara Francophone Employment and Resource Centre (CERF Niagara), Desjardins Caisse Sud-Ouest Ontario and the following partners: Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir, Conseil scolaire laïque Viamonde, Entité², La Maison de la culture francophone du Niagara and Réseau de soutien à l'immigration francophone Centre-Sud-Ouest



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Living in Niagara

Living in Niagara means enjoying the bounties of one of Canada's most well known destinations. We can enjoy an afternoon at one of our many wineries, play golf at one of more than forty courses or enjoy Niagara's cuisine, attractions or a top ranked spa.

For Niagara's French-speaking population, it also means keeping our culture alive in our schools, in our workplace, and throughout the community.

The Francophone Population in Niagara

Geographic Distribution

In this document, Niagara Region refers to the Regional Municipality of Niagara. It consists of twelve municipalities and 447,888 residents. The map below shows how Francophones are dispersed throughout Niagara Region.

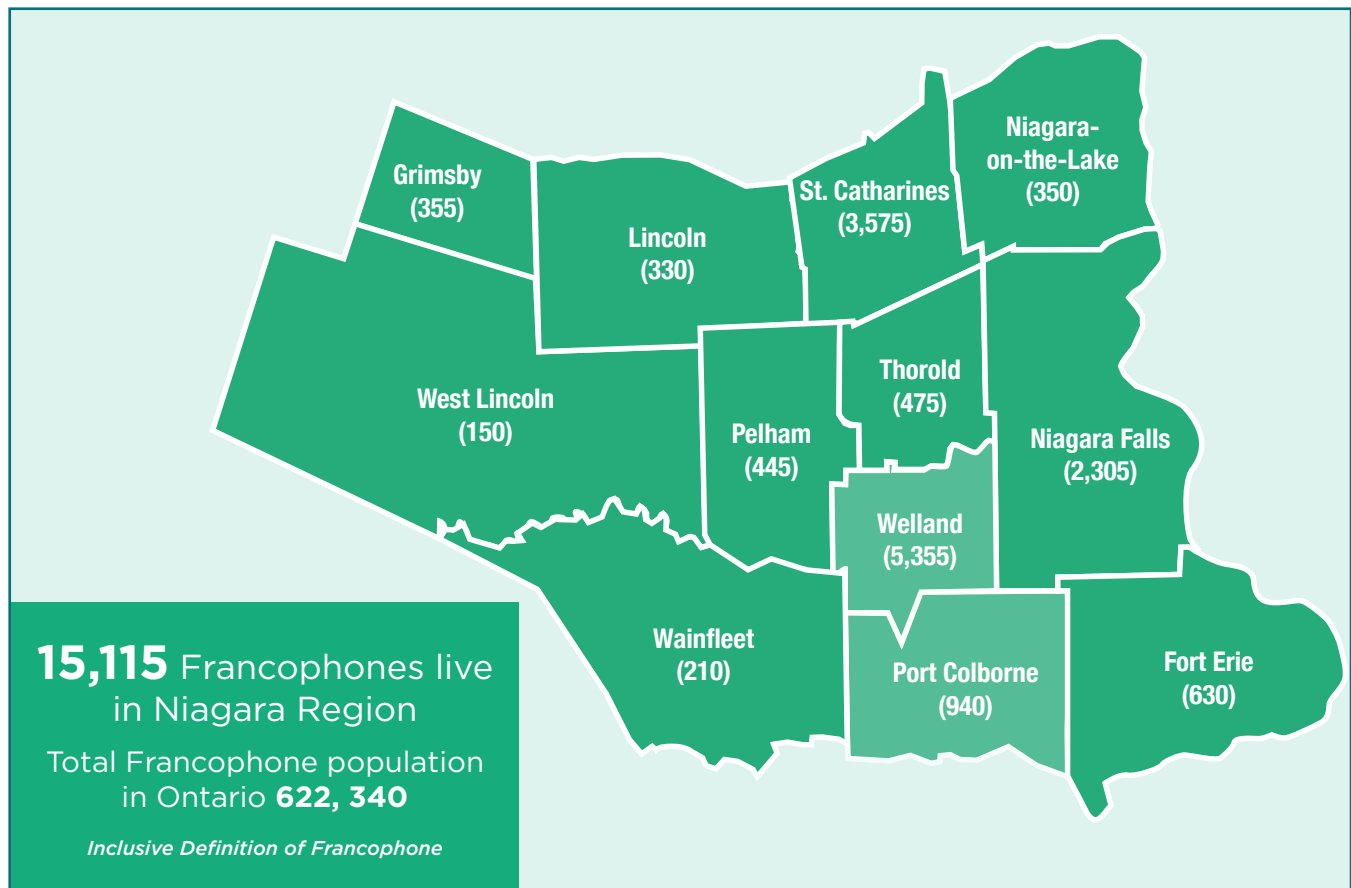
Francophones live in all twelve municipalities and their number is highest in Welland, followed by St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Port Colborne.

There is always something new and my family and I are growing along with the region.

Gaston



Distribution of Francophone Population in the Niagara Region



Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census

Inclusive Definition of Francophone

Statistics Canada uses different criteria based on linguistic attributes. Four principle indicators were used as criteria in the 2016 Population Census: mother tongue statistics, the ability to converse effectively in French, the language spoken at home and the first official language spoken.

The first official language spoken (FOLS) is arrived at through three questions on the Census questionnaire as to knowledge of official languages, mother tongue and the language most spoken at home.

The 2016 Census shows that the Francophone population of Welland is 5,355 individuals and represents 10.3% of the total population. A notable presence of Francophones is shown in three other cities in the region, namely, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Port Colborne.

Designated Areas

The 1986 French Language Services Act states that citizens residing in designated areas have the right to access French language services from the provincial government. All government ministries and government organizations must offer French language services even if their offices are located outside of designated areas. Access to French language services is determined by the location of the clientele not the location of government offices.

In Niagara, both Port Colborne and Welland are designated areas.

Welland is also a member of the *Centre de la Francophonie des Amériques* and of the *Réseau des villes francophones et francophiles d'Amérique*.



French Language Services Act

Thanks to the French Language Services Act, all of the services that are provided to the public by a ministry or agency of the Government of Ontario (driver's licence, birth certificate, information, etc.) are available in French in the government offices located in or serving a designated area. (Service Ontario and Service Canada).

September 25 was formally declared as Franco-Ontarian Day in 2010.



A FORCE FOR ACTION: CULTURAL IDENTITY

The Franco-Ontarian Flag

The Franco-Ontarian flag was first raised on September 25, 1975 on the campus of the University of Sudbury. The flag became the symbol of the Franco-Ontarian community and was officially recognized by the government of Ontario on June 21, 2001.

Since 2014, a flag mast at Welland Civic Square is reserved for the Franco-Ontarian flag.

Franco-Ontarian Day



Each year, the cities of Welland, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls organize Franco-Ontarian Day celebrations and flag raising ceremonies.

At night, Bridge 13 on East Main Street in Welland is illuminated in green and white.

Franco-Ontarian Heritage

History

In 1917, Welland's Empire Cotton Mill factory started to recruit French Canadians who had come from the province of Québec. They were known for their weaving expertise. At that time, twenty families had moved in close proximity to the factory, attracted by the competitive salaries offered to workers.

The neighbourhood quickly became the main hub for the Francophone community and still today is known as *French Town*. Other factories including Atlas Steel continued to recruit the workers from Québec to man their local businesses.

French pioneers first settled in the region four hundred years ago.

Welland's thriving economy later attracted a large number of Francophones from Québec, New Brunswick and Northern Ontario.

Over the years, with the building of French language schools, financial institutions, churches and social clubs, Welland's Francophone population continued to grow. In 1946, there were 3,000 Francophones and today, there are more than 5,300.

53,185 Niagara residents have French origins.

Source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census



There is a plaque installed near Sacré Cœur church in Welland honouring the Francophone community.

It explains the history of the first Francophones who settled in the region.

The Winter Carnival is among the many events organized by Club Richelieu of Welland, founded in 1957.

Community Life

You will enjoy discovering the many community events aimed at Francophones and Francophiles. Several groups and agencies organize activities for children, teens and adults. Here are a few examples.

Arts and Culture

Cinéfest Niagara is part of the Film Circuit, a division of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). For 22 years, it has hosted a monthly film series and produced FrancoFest, a French film festival which is a three day event, offered every two years.

Since its inception in 2016, **La Maison de la culture francophone du Niagara**, has served as a focal point for the promotion of French language and culture in the region. It is attuned to the needs of a dynamic French speaking community and gives Francophones young and old, the opportunity to live their culture and to pursue recreational activities in French.

French performances can be seen at local venues such as **Niagara Falls Fallsview Casino** and **St. Catharines FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre**.

The **Welland Museum** promotes and celebrates the Francophone community through annual exhibits and cultural activities.

Social Clubs

Social clubs promote meetings and exchanges. Some bring volunteers together to work on community projects while other groups work in the fields of cultural heritage and the arts.

- Club Richelieu hosts the annual Winter Carnival which takes place during the first week-end in February.
- Club LaSalle organizes a surf and turf dinner in June, a golf tournament in September, a New Year's *Réveillon* and a weekly open mic night every Thursday evening.
- Club Griffon takes part in the Grape and Wine Festival Parade with the participation of students from Jean Vanier Catholic High School.
- Retraite Action! Niagara offers programming and activities for young retirees who wish to remain fit and active.

*When I retired,
I wanted to live
somewhere close to
nature and lead a
healthy lifestyle.*

Mark



A FORCE FOR ACTION: ACTIVE SENIORS

The **Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara (CSCHN)** offers seniors a wide range of services, free of charge, at several locations in the region:

- La Résidence Richelieu (Welland);
- Le Club Social (Welland);
- La Résidence (St. Catharines);
- Le Club d'Âge d'Or St-Antoine (Niagara Falls);
- La Résidence Joie de Vivre (Niagara Falls);
- Le Centre Polyvalent des aînés de Port Colborne.

The CSCHN also offers fitness programs including walking groups, mental gymnastics exercises, workshops - *Soyons Actifs* (Let's Be Active), *Garder l'équilibre* (Keep Balance) as well as a weekly film showing - *le Coin à Justin* (Justin's Corner).

In our Schools and Child Care Centres An Inclusive Environment

In all thirteen French schools in the Niagara region, instruction, school life and extracurricular activities take place in French, in a Francophone environment. All of the French language schools under the **Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir** and the **Conseil scolaire laïque Viamonde** have on staff full-time specialized cultural educators who see to the students developing identity, who work on harmonization and who encourage inclusion through various activities.

Several annual events celebrate cultural diversity:

- Black History Month
- National Francophone Immigration Week
- Citizenship Week
- The multi-cultural show organized by the students of the Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir
- The citizenship ceremonies held at École secondaire catholique Jean Vanier (Welland) and at École élémentaire catholique Saint-Joseph (Port Colborne)
- The *Festival Monde du Son* organized by the Conseil scolaire laïque Viamonde (the 4th edition of this festival will take place in St. Catharines, spring 2019).



Niagara's Francophone students are very active in the community. They participate in several activities including the Folk Arts Centre Festival with various choirs from our elementary schools, improvisation clubs and also various intergenerational activities in our communities.

Students from Jean Vanier and Confédération high schools host Radio-Canada's radio show *Grands Lacs Café*, broadcast from the Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara in Welland.

Child Care

The child care co-op **La Boîte à soleil** offers comprehensive programs across Niagara Region. The non-profit child care centres provide a full range of services, from infant to preschool care and before and after school programs. The centres are located in French language schools of both the Catholic and secular board. The organization serves the local Francophone families of St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Welland and Port Colborne.

*It's a place where
our children can grow
and thrive.*

Thomas



A FORCE FOR ACTION: EDUCATION

In September 2019, a new school complex in Welland will open its doors. Two French language schools, **École élémentaire Champlain** and **École secondaire Confédération** will take in students from all across the Niagara region, from kindergarten to grade 6 and from grades 7 to 12.



Making friends at La Boîte à soleil LaMarsh School location in Niagara Falls - 1 of 7 centres across the Niagara region.

Cultural Diversity

In Niagara, cultural diversity within the Francophone community is celebrated throughout the year with events organized by local associations. These activities are organized as part of special events including National Francophone Immigration Week, Citizenship Week, Black History Month and most notably as part of the *Festiv'Ébène*. This yearly festival is organized by **SOFIFRAN**, a support organization for African women, in partnership with Brock University. It is held in St. Catharines and offers music performances, a literary café and visual art exhibits.

Métis Nation

The Métis people have a distinct identity, culture and language. The michif language is a blend of European and local indigenous languages. In Ontario, michif derives from the Algonquian language. In the Niagara region, one third of the Métis population (more than one thousand individuals) is of European French origin. The Métis came from the northwest of the province and settled in the region in the early 1900's to work in local industries.

The Immigrant Component

The 2016 National Household Survey revealed a 19% increase in Francophone immigration to Niagara when compared to 2011 results. Francophone immigrants, based on maternal language, represent 11.3% of the total French population in the region.

Based on maternal language, a large proportion of Francophone immigrants come from a limited number of countries. Data from the 2016 Census reveals that 39% of Francophone immigrants come from Africa, 27% are from Europe and approximately 34% are from the Americas including the Caribbean. Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo contribute the most French speaking immigrants to the region.

Niagara Region	2011	2016	Analysis
Francophone Immigration	1 440	1 715	+19%
Francophone Population (Total)	15 580	15 115	
Percentage of New Entrants	9.20%	11.30%	

We received a warm welcome to Canada.

Jenny



A FORCE FOR ACTION: IMMIGRATION

SOFIFRAN's three year pilot project, *Securing Women in the Niagara Region*, is funded by the federal ministry of Status of Women Canada. Its goal is to improve women's access to childcare and transportation services. Working in partnership with both Francophone and Anglophone stakeholders, the project seeks to assist low income Francophone immigrants in matters of employment and to help improve women's economic security.



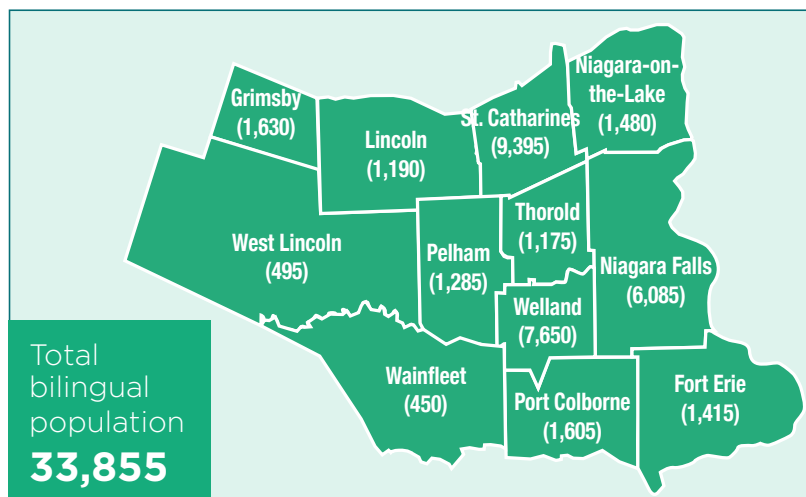
Festiv'Ébène celebrations

Bilingualism

A GROWING FORCE

Niagara residents identifying as bilingual are enthusiastic participants in all activities that allow them the opportunity to “live in French”. This includes cultural events, sports activities, social group dinners and gatherings that encourage the French language.

Distribution of Niagara’s Bilingual Population



Source : Statistics Canada 2016 Census

Brock University hosts a number of events and activities aimed at Francophones and Francophiles:

- Brock-Niagara’s French Contest is an annual competition which has been hosted by the French Studies department for the last 40 years.
- Film series presented by The Film House at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre.
- French guided tours at Rodman Hall Art Centre – Visual Arts.
- French literary radio show on Brock Radio (CFBU 103.7): *Tic-tac: poétiques et portraits*.



Did you know?

Brock University offers French as a Second Language Training program (Bachelor of Education).

The rate of bilingualism has increased by **8.8% in Niagara.**

2016 statistics show an increase when compared to the 2011 National Household Survey.

Students in French immersion programs offered in both of Niagara’s English school boards are encouraged to explore French culture and traditions and to participate in several artistic, musical and sports activities such as:

- An annual speaking competition organized by Canadian Parents for French (held in May).
- National Canadian Film Day (held in April).
- *La Forêt de la lecture* (Forest of Reading) – Ontario Library Association.
- A full day of activities carried out in French for grades 9 and 10 from the French as Second Language program. Professional Francophone actors and artists engage with students who discover and learn the value of bilingualism in cultural and professional spheres.

7.6% of Niagara’s total population is bilingual in both of Canada’s official languages (English and French)



*This is where I grew up
and I am proud to have
come back here to work
after my studies.*

Nathalie



Francophones in the Labour Market

A good knowledge of French is an asset in the Niagara region labour market especially in the fields of education and health and in call centres and government agencies such as the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. Tourism employers also hire bilingual staff to work in vineyards, hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions and historic sites in Niagara.

CERF (Centre d'emploi et de ressources francophones) is the only French employment centre in the Niagara region. The centre offers help with job seeking and free recruiting services for employers.



Did you know?

Ontario is facing a shortage of qualified Francophone teachers. Jobs are available in our French language schools!

A FORCE FOR ACTION: EMPLOYMENT

There are several opportunities for professional careers for Francophones. CERF Niagara participates in many employment-related events:

- International recruiting by the **Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program** assists employers in finding qualified, bilingual workers in demand in Niagara's tourism, hospitality and commerce industries.
- University students have the opportunity to meet with tourism industry professionals during **Brock University's** roundtables on employment.
- As part of a pilot project entitled *Autobus Carrières santé*, **Collège Boréal** Toronto and Hamilton students in nursing, social work, psychoeducation and elder care took part in a tour of a number of designated French language health services providers to fill job vacancies in Niagara.

Health

The **Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara** in Welland is a designated Francophone health services provider. The medical clinic offers primary care in French.

Niagara's French-speaking population can access a wide range of health and wellness programs including counseling, elder care, nutrition and fitness.

Services to seniors

Staff members also travel to bring a wide range of free services to the elderly across the region's Francophone centres in Welland, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Port Colborne.

Support services available to elderly and vulnerable adults include:

- Homecare
- Nursing care
- Fitness program
- Occupational therapy
- Foot care



In Welland, the Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara Medical Clinic provides primary care in French.

We appreciate the right of Francophones to be offered French language services and work with our partners to provide them.

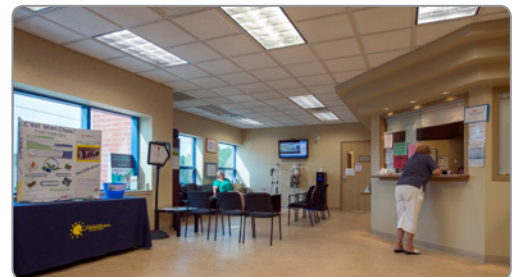
Ann Godfrey

Director of Development and Public Relations, Family and Children Services Niagara (FACS)



A FORCE FOR ACTION: HEALTH

- Welland's **Foyer Richelieu** will soon double its capacity from 62 to 128 long-term care beds, addressing a growing need in the region.
- The Inter-agency Roundtable of Niagara supports **The Welcoming Community** project, dedicated to the recruitment and retention of bilingual health professionals.





*I owe my success
in business to the
Francophone community.*

Andrée



Economic Development

The Business Community

With half of North America’s population located within a one-day drive, Niagara is an ideal location to easily connect with customers and suppliers. While there are over 100 border crossings between the US and Canada, goods that crossed the five crossings located in Niagara in 2016 accounted for 14.1% of all goods traded between the two countries.

Foreign Trade Zone

In 2016, Niagara Region was designated a Foreign Trade Zone Point. The first in Ontario, Niagara’s FTZ promotes Niagara Region as a hub for international trade and attracts foreign and domestic investment.

Niagara Development Corridor

The **Niagara Region Economic Development** program focuses on business attraction, expansion and retention.

Incubation and Innovation

Educational partners **Brock University** and **Niagara College** support technical talent and enterprise as active participants in a wide range of innovation centres including:

- St. Catharines Enterprise Centre
- Niagara Falls Small Business Enterprise Centre
- Spark Niagara
- BioLinc
- ihub
- Innovate Niagara

Niagara Industrial Association

The Niagara Industrial Association is the leading voice and advocate of the manufacturing sector in Niagara, Canada.

A FORCE FOR ACTION: ECONOMY

- Niagara Region will host the **2021 Canada Summer Games**, generating over 200 million dollars in economic activity over the course of two weeks. This is an opportunity to celebrate our country’s official languages.
- **Weekday GO train commuter service** is to expand to Grimsby by 2021 and to Niagara Falls by 2023.
- The new 5,000 seat theatre at **Fallsview Casino Resort** is scheduled to open in time for summer 2019.



Venture Niagara is a bilingual office offering business financing and free business advisory services.

Over \$20,000,000
in repayable financing has
been provided to local businesses
across Niagara.

*Investing in new
and existing businesses
creates and maintains
sustainable employment
in the community.*

Just like a kaleidoscope, the Francophone community of Niagara is in constant transformation. We hope that this community portrait will encourage Francophones and Francophiles from everywhere to contribute to this melting pot of colours and textures that form our vibrant community.



Towards a Positive Future

This updated community profile paints the portrait of a vibrant and engaged community and suggests that now is a good time for action!

As Francophones, we recognize the considerable effort of the generations that preceded us here in Niagara. Four hundred years of French presence has left deep roots that continue to feed our sense of community and nurture our pride.

It is now our turn to champion our language and our culture. By providing an environment conducive to our cultural development, we also contribute to the development of a sustainable economy.

The *Bonjour Niagara* Campaign

Bonjour Niagara is an awareness campaign and a first step to help ensure a positive future. It is meant to be a friendly campaign that promotes inclusivity. It serves as a rallying point and is the driver of our future success. Its main objectives are to inform Francophones of resources available to them in their community, to promote activities carried out in French and to relate all other pertinent information that will allow Francophones to be or to become a force for action.

The project is aimed at all Francophones, whether from the region or newly arrived from other parts of Canada, immigrants or refugees from around the world. We wish to encourage them all to settle in our welcoming community.

To participate in the *Bonjour Niagara* campaign, follow us on social media and learn all about us.

Share **bonjourniagara.com** on your web site.

Be immersed | Be informed | Be inspired

bonjourniagara.com  

A FORCE FOR ACTION: OUR COMMUNITY

Niagara's Francophone community is a force in action! We are moving forward with projects and partnerships to raise our profile across the Niagara landscape. The strengths of Niagara's Francophone community are many:

- Our common will to implement the 2016-2020 Inter-Agency strategic plan.
- Our commitment to improve access to services for Niagara's Francophones by working in collaboration with service providers.
- Our diversity and enthusiasm which both contribute to our collective development.
- Our support of bilingual initiatives, ever growing in Niagara.
- Our commitment to partnership and connection with Niagara's Anglophone community.
- Our availability to collaborate at a national and international level.

**We are ready for business.
Are you?**