



**WELCOME TO  
WINTER: CALGARY  
WINTER  
PREPAREDNESS  
HANDBOOK  
DECEMBER 2023**

*Updated December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023*



**NOTE** - This document will be updated semi-frequently to provide the most accurate information possible. If you have any feedback or recommendations you would like to share as you utilize this handbook, please reach out to Aizel Castejon ([acastejon@aaisa.ca](mailto:acastejon@aaisa.ca)).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>WELCOME TO WINTER</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<i>What is Calgary winter like?</i> .....	<b>3</b>
<i>Why is important to prepare for Calgary winter as a newcomer?</i> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>GENERAL RESOURCES</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>STAYING WARM</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<i>Weather Information</i> .....	<b>4</b>
<i>Clothing</i> .....	<b>4</b>
<i>Housing</i> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>STAYING SAFE</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<i>Transportation</i> .....	<b>6</b>
<i>Mental Health</i> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>STAYING CONNECTED</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>RESOURCES</b> .....	<b>9</b>

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) acknowledges the land known as Moh'kinstsis (Calgary) which is Blackfoot for the joining of two rivers – the Elbow and Bow. AAISA recognizes we are situated upon the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations, the Métis Districts (5 and 6), and the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta. AAISA serves members across the province of Alberta which are comprised of Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8 territories, the traditional lands of First Nations and Métis peoples. We acknowledge all 21 Metis Districts, and the lands which comprise Alberta and with which indigenous peoples have lived and stewarded since time immemorial. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or



are visiting. As members of the settlement and integration sector, it is of the utmost importance we can acknowledge these lands in recognition of Canada's colonial history, and the deep impact settlement has had and continues to have, on Indigenous peoples here and across the world. We hope this acknowledgment can inform all facets of our work, in the spirit of friendship and joint stewardships with indigenous communities, particularly under the calls to action outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

## WELCOME TO WINTER

Welcome to Calgary Winter! Whether this is your first winter in Calgary or your tenth, AAISA invites you to use this handbook to better prepare yourself for the winter season. Through this handbook, AAISA hopes to present the winter resources and information available within Calgary in an accessible way. You will find a few resources that AAISA has collated regarding warmth, safety, and community and to support the work of service agencies as they help prepare their clients for the season. This handbook will be frequently updated to ensure that the resources listed are accurate! As of December 2023, the information provided is accurate and any mentioned resources are accessible and available for your use!

### *What is Calgary winter like?*

Winter months generally occur during December, January, and February (Arrive, 2020). Winter can often begin in November and temperatures may remain chilly through late March or early April (Weather Spark, n.d.). January is the coldest month of the year in Calgary, averaging between  $-11^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $-1^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Weather Spark, n.d.). With a prairie-steppe type climate, winters include high sunshine hours and a windy climate (Living in Canada, n.d.). Overall, Alberta is the sunniest province in Canada with 312 days of sun per year (Travel Alberta Canada, n.d.).

### *Why is important to prepare for Calgary winter as a newcomer?*

Both individual attributes and external factors can affect an individual's degree to which they integrate into Canadian society (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998). Canadian weather can be an external factor which affects newcomer settlement. Adjusting to Canada's seasons can be difficult without community support and ample information. Misconceptions regarding the winter season can create even harder adjustments, therefore this handbook attempts to collate knowledge to combat those barriers and have newcomers feeling more comfortable with the Calgary winter.

## GENERAL RESOURCES

The [City of Calgary](#) has compiled resources, tips, and all the need-to-know information offered in the Calgary, whether it's your first winter in this city or your twentieth!

- <https://www.calgary.ca/communities/newcomers/First-winter-in-Calgary.html>

[The Immigrant Education Society \(TIES\)](#) offer guides to help newcomers find the services and programs right for their needs. This link offers extensive information on winter in Canada,

exploring information such as winter drinks, working out indoors throughout the season, winter foods to try, and much more.

- <https://www.immigrant-education.ca/guides-categories/winter-in-canada>

[Arrive](#) offers information about how to prepare for your first winter in Canada, explaining weather patterns, how to prepare your home, getting your car ready, and other safety tips for the winter season.

- <https://arrivein.com/daily-life-in-canada/how-to-prepare-for-your-first-winter-in-canada/>

## STAYING WARM

### *Weather Information*

It is important to stay updated on weather conditions to plan travels, dress appropriately, and be prepared for any harsh conditions that may be upcoming. Some weather network or applications we recommend are:

- <https://www.theweathernetwork.com/ca/weather/alberta/calgary>
- <https://weather.com/en-CA/weather/today/l/23572c2998b3cfe86d9a16cdf83e9b097469087ab1e7120325448a4a3960c360>

The [Government of Canada](#) has tips for combatting the winter weather and discusses common Canadian weather terminology, such as wind chill.

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/weather-health/wind-chill-cold-weather/wind-chill-index.html>

For more information about common weather trends or Calgary seasons, [LifeInCalgary](#) goes over what winter is really like here in this city.

- <https://www.lifeincalgary.ca/live-in-calgary/weather/>

### *Clothing*

It is important to dress appropriately during the winter months. Here are a few tips for you to get started!

- <https://www.cciswelcomehere.com/post/dressing-for-winter-in-canada>
- <https://canadianimmigrant.ca/settlement/weather/the-stay-warm-winter-guide-for-canadian-newcomers-part-1>
- <https://www.immigrant-education.ca/ties-guides/how-do-i-dress-for-winter-in-calgary>

- <https://canadianimmigrant.ca/settlement/weather/the-stay-warm-winter-guide-for-canadian-newcomers-part-1>

Beyond information regarding how to make sure you are staying warm during winter, AISA has collected a few resources offered in Calgary regarding clothing:

[Making Changes](#) offers a Dress for Success program that provides 90-minute individual consultations on professional business attire for women. My Best Friend's Closet is a youth empowerment program that provides teenaged girls with clothing, shoes and accessories.

- <https://www.makingchangesassociation.ca/dressforsuccesscalgary>
- <https://calgary.dressforsuccess.org/>
- <https://www.makingchangesassociation.ca/my-best-friends-closet>

[Jacket Racket Calgary](#) has been providing winter jackets to Calgary children since the 1980's and runs every year through the Calgary Board of Education and Calgary Catholic School District. For more information regarding this program, please email [jacketracketcalgary@gmail.com](mailto:jacketracketcalgary@gmail.com) or call (403) 618-0829.

- <http://jacketracketcalgary.com/>

Non-profit thrift stores and donation centres can also be a great resource for finding quality clothing for more reasonable prices.

- <https://www.goodwill.ab.ca/thrift-store-locations/>
- <https://salvationarmy.ca/locator/>
- <https://stores.savers.com/>
- <https://www.winsyyc.ca/thrift-stores>
- <https://www.goodsamaritanthriftyyc.com/>

## ***Housing***

It can be difficult to navigate how to keep your house warm and safe during the cold winter. Here are a few helpful tips for house preparation:

- <https://calgaryhousingcompany.org/tips-to-prepare-your-residence-for-winter/>
- <https://how-to.settlementcalgary.com/winter-in-alberta/>
- <https://canadianimmigrant.ca/settlement/weather/the-stay-warm-winter-guide-for-canadian-newcomers-part-4-healthy-home-and-family>

## STAYING SAFE

### *Transportation*

Whether you are using public transportation or driving your own personal vehicle, road safety information is vital to know for Calgarian winter.

[The Calgary Transit](#) is the public transportation service in Calgary. They frequently announce bus schedule changes, fare information, and rider tools as their service delivery evolves from season to season.

- To plan your trip, see when the next ride is available, or access schedules and maps, use this link: <https://www.calgarytransit.com/home.html>
- For a pdf version of the map of public transportation, use this link: <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/csps/cns/documents/immigrants-newcomers-refugees/newcomers-map.pdf&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1700850232444301&usg=AOvVaw0qdExt4UN33LeN6Dye19R>
- The Fair Entry program provides services for low income Calgarians and can be read about at this link: <https://www.calgary.ca/social-services/low-income/fair-entry-subsidy.html>
- Calgary Transit also has an app you can download to your personal device. For information regarding this app, use this link: <https://www.calgarytransit.com/content/transit/en/home/news/calgary-transit-app-discontinued.html>

As for preparing your car for winter road conditions, here is some useful information:

- <https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/sfttps/tp201012-en.aspx>
- <https://www.calgarytransit.com/content/transit/en/home/rider-information/traveling-in-winter.html>
- <https://www.alberta.ca/safer-winter-highways>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/calgary/features/winter-driving/#:~:text=Slow%20down%20and%20wear%20your,can%20skid%2C%20so%20be%20prepared.>
- <https://calgaryfirstaidtraining.ca/2017/11/20/what-to-include-in-a-car-first-aid-kit-for-a-winter-getaway/>

## ***Mental Health***

One obstacle of harsh winters can be the difficulty of adjusting to the effects on mental health. With less sun-filled days, cold weather, and the temptation of staying inside, winter blues and seasonal affective disorder (SAD) can be quite common. Here is useful information for you to feel equipped about the emotions that may come with winter:

- <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/seasonal-affective-disorder>
- <https://cmha.ca/news/winter-blues-101/>

There are plenty resources offered in Calgary to support your mental health, accessible year-round.

[Kids Help Phone](#) offers mental health services 24/7 across Canada for kids, teens, and young adults.

- <https://kidshelpphone.ca/wellness-support-in-multiple-languages/>

[Wellness Together Canada](#) offers mental health and substance use support. They offer resources and tools for both youth and adults.

- <https://www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-ca/real-holiday-tales>

[Alberta Health Services \(AHS\)](#) is part of Canada's first and largest provincewide health system and delivers services to residents of Alberta. They offer programs and services specific to addiction and mental health.

- <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page14063.aspx>

[Distress Centre Calgary](#) offers 24-hour crisis support and crisis counselling, as they are committed to creating an environment built around protecting and caring for others. Their services can be accessed through phone, text, or chat.

- <https://distresscentre.com/>

[Centre for Newcomers](#) offers mental health settlement, non-therapeutic counselling, and crisis intervention for clients. To access services, please email: [vpreferral@centrefornewcomers.ca](mailto:vpreferral@centrefornewcomers.ca)

- <https://www.centrefornewcomers.ca/mentalhealth>

TIES offers the Healthy Minds program, which provides free and confidential services to newcomers. Their resources include coping tools and educational videos. Counselling and workshops are also offered by this program.

- <https://www.tieshealthyminds.ca/>

## STAYING CONNECTED

Despite it being winter, there are still many activities you can enjoy during the season. Winter activities can help you feel more connected to the city and cultivate a sense of belonging. Here are a few tips and fun ideas for the winter time:

- <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/safety-and-winter-activities.aspx>
- <https://www.visitcalgary.com/things-to-do/stories-from-calgary/outdoor-winter-activities>
- <https://thenewcomer.ca/life-in-canada/affordable-winter-activity-gear-guide-for-newcomers/>

Enjoy free resources, events, and programs at any of the 21 [Calgary Public Library](#) locations. The local library provides various services all year round for students, businesses, newcomers, babies, toddlers, and many more.

- To find the closest local library to you, use this link: <https://calgarylibrary.ca/your-library/locations/>
- For newcomer resources ran by the library, such as the Newcomers Desk, use this link: <https://calgarylibrary.ca/connect/new-to-canada/>
- To explore upcoming events, use this link: <https://calgarylibrary.ca/events-and-programs/upcoming-events/>
- For fun winter wonderland programs at the Calgary Public Library, use this link: <https://calgarylibrary.ca/events-and-programs/programs/?query=Winter+Wonderland#events-programs-filters>



## RESOURCES

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