

Workshop empowers immigrant renters

July 27, 2012 | [Winnipeg Free Press](#)

Moving from a refugee camp to a rental property isn't easy, especially when you don't know the language or the rules, say advocates helping the Bhutanese community learn the ropes.

"In the Bhutanese community, people have many problems renting a house," said Puspa Dahal, who has his own problems. He's one of 5,500 Bhutanese refugees the Canadian government agreed to resettle from UN-run camps in Nepal where 108,000 lived for nearly two decades.

"We're used to living in a refugee camp -- we have no idea of renting a house in Canada," said Dahal, who came to Canada in 2010.

In Winnipeg, there are about 500 Bhutanese people, said Dahal. He attended a rental workshop Wednesday for Bhutanese people put on by New Journey Housing. It was an eye-opener, he said, especially for people having problems.

New Journey Housing, the non-profit agency that helps newcomers find housing, hopes the workshop will inspire confidence in tenants and landlords.

Participants who complete the workshop get a certificate they can show to potential future landlords when applying for an apartment, said New Journey Housing's executive director Susan Radstrom.

"The workshop can also help landlords to feel more comfortable renting to newcomers who do not have a rental history," she said. "The landlords know that the newcomers have taken a workshop regarding being responsible, paying rent on time, keeping your apartment clean, et cetera."

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