



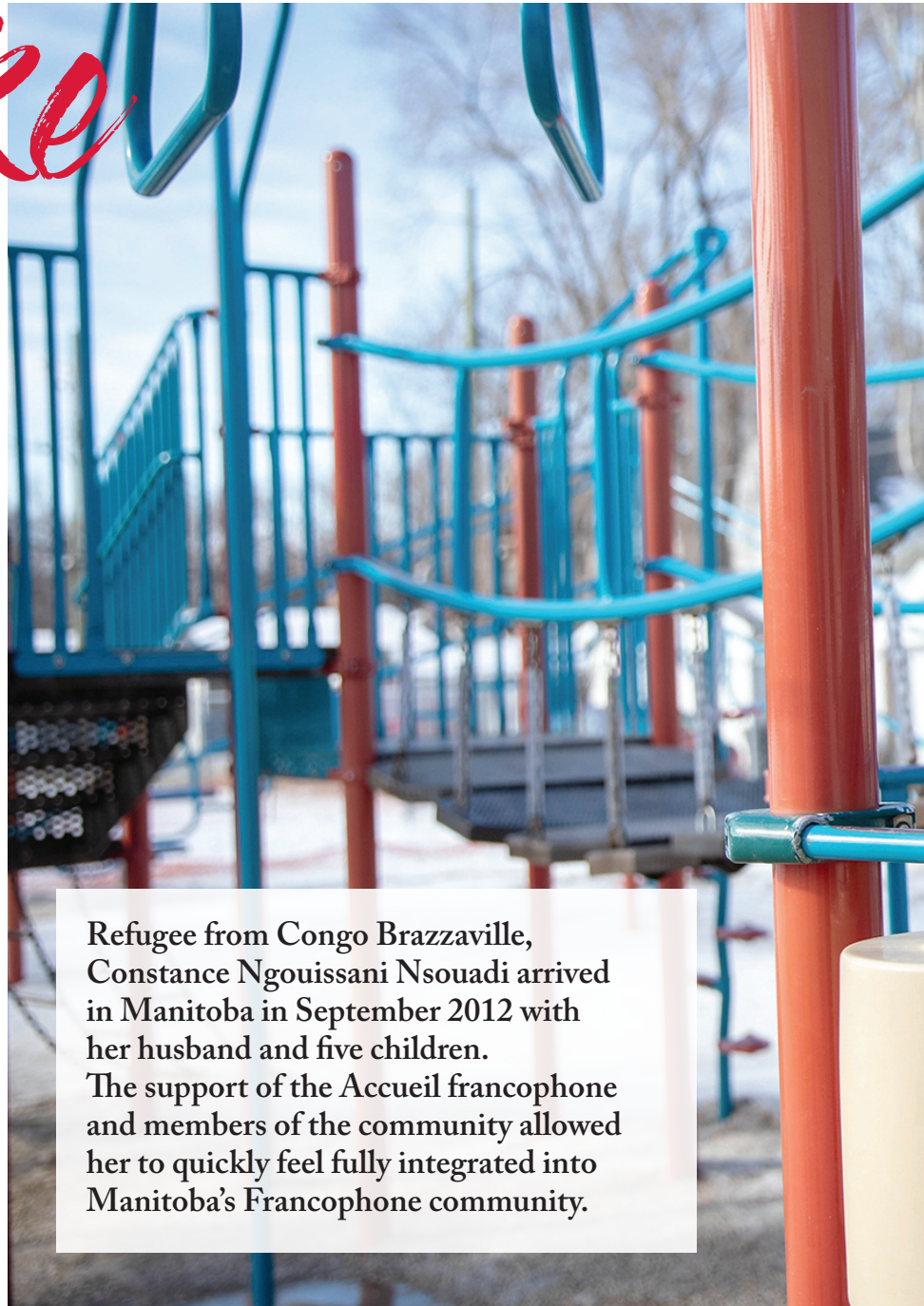
TO *feel like* YOU'RE HOME

BY CAMILLE HARPER

It was while they were refugees in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, that Constance Ngouissani Nsouadi, her husband and five children aged 6 to 16, learned that they were expected in Canada. The mother recalls, “We didn’t know where in Canada. It wasn’t until the day of our trip that we knew it was going to be Winnipeg. We didn’t even know where it was!”

After two stops in France and Ottawa, the family of seven finally arrived in Winnipeg. “Boris Ntambwe from the Accueil francophone was at the airport to greet us and then took us to transitional housing. He had left us some money, and most importantly, he had filled the fridge. I had wondered before how we would be able to start over again elsewhere with nothing, but we already had everything: furniture, food...

“The next day, on a Saturday, Christophe Mbélé (Coordinator at the Accueil francophone) even took me to a place where there was food from Africa. There was cassava! It was important for me to find what I was most comfortable with.”



Refugee from Congo Brazzaville, Constance Ngouissani Nsouadi arrived in Manitoba in September 2012 with her husband and five children. The support of the Accueil francophone and members of the community allowed her to quickly feel fully integrated into Manitoba’s Francophone community.



photo: Marta Guerrero

CONSTANCE NGOUISSANI NSOUADI

The following Monday, the couple was taken to the Accueil francophone for an orientation session. Since then, Constance Ngouissani Nsouadi Nsouadi has often attended the organization for workshops or counselling. “It helped me reduce my stress and better face Canada, and Manitoba, to better understand them.”

The day after her arrival, Constance Ngouissani Nsouadi Nsouadi was already thinking about finding work. “It was a Saturday and there was no one in the streets. We were used to the atmosphere on Saturdays. In Congo Brazzaville, it’s party time. It’s the market. There is a lot of movement. So I said to myself: I have to find a job quickly so I don’t get bored!”

Once again, the Accueil francophone was up to the task: “The Accueil had noticed that many refugee women were staying at home and not doing anything, so in 2013, they brought together a group of women, including me, to take a health and safety course. I got good grades and was able to continue at the Université de Saint-Boniface in Early Childhood Studies. I graduated in 2016.

“I wasn’t even thinking about Early Childhood as a profession, but the Accueil francophone pushed and supported me. They made a good choice for me.”

Constance Ngouissani Nsouadi now works full time at Les Enfants Précieux daycare in St. Boniface. In addition, thanks to her interpersonal skills, she has become a volunteer at the Précieux-Sang Parish and sings with the Chorale des Intrépides. She was also a volunteer at the Festival du Voyageur for three years, as well as in other daycares.

“The Accueil francophone quickly became like my parents’ home. If there was anything, they were there. Even today, if I have a question or a problem, they are always there to welcome me and find a solution.”