

IMMIGRANT MUSE

Volume 1, issue 4

Information | Insight | Inspiration.

INVISIBLE IMMIGRANTS

Who are they? How does their invisibility impact their lives in Canada?

Living to Your Full Potential Through Goal Setting

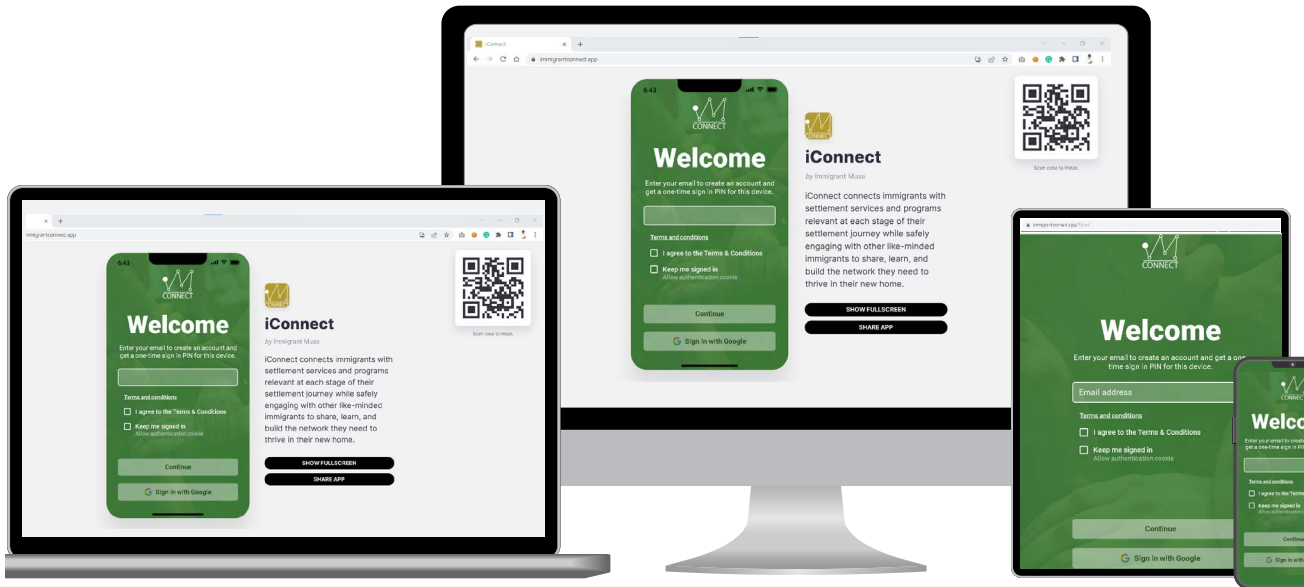


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iConnect App



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For immigrants

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- Feel empowered to achieve your Canadian dream

For settlement service providers

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- Get user-generated insights on immigrants' settlement needs
- Reach immigrants who are more likely to benefit from your programs and services.

Create an account



immigrantconnect.app

For sponsorship opportunities, contact partnership@immigrantmuse.ca

About

IMMIGRANTMUSE

Immigrant Muse advocates for first-generation immigrants and empowers them with the information, insight and inspiration to successfully navigate the Canadian system and culture through the Immigrant Muse Magazine and iConnect App (immigrantconnect.app).

Immigrant Muse Magazine is published online monthly and in print three times annually (April, August, and December).

Immigrant Muse offers a free advocacy service that helps immigrants find answers to crucial questions they would have otherwise not been able to answer because of organizational bureaucracy. This service has made organizations more aware of their internal biases towards immigrants and made changes to become more inclusive in their operational practices.

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Editor's MUSE

The last few months have seen a lot of changes across various sectors and spheres of life, impacting many Canadians, immigrants and newcomers inclusive, from the increasing cost of living to the massive labour shortage. These changes have affected us too at Immigrant Muse. As a result, we have decided to cut back on the number of issues we print annually. Starting in 2023, we'll begin printing three issues of the Immigrant Muse Magazine each year rather than four. We'll mail magazines to subscribers in April, August and December. This decision will allow us to continue researching and publishing quality articles with insights that inform and inspire our readers and advocate for immigrants.

Hurray! We have officially launched our long-awaited app, iConnect. During the virtual Immigrant Connect conference on November 10, 2022, we launched the app and have since gotten much helpful feedback that feeds into our growth

plan. We are grateful to everyone who made the app development and launch conference successful. At the conference, our keynote speaker, Sue Sadler, Senior Vice President of Service and Program Innovation at ACCES Employment, delivered tips to refocus on immigrant retention. We also had three breakout rooms with speakers and panellists speaking on various topics of interest to immigrants and stakeholders in the immigration and settlement sector. The conference aimed to have immigrant-led conversations on issues impacting immigrants to influence policies and practices. I am happy to announce that this will become an annual event. More information will be available in the next issue.

In this issue, we share insight about the class of immigrants that usually do not appear as one - the invisible immigrants. Why do we naturally not visualize an immigrant as a white person with straight hair who speaks good English? How does

being invisible affect the settlement trajectory of such immigrants? Tom Miller, a writer that recently joined Immigrant Muse and an invisible immigrant himself, shares a first-person narrative on what it means to be an invisible immigrant.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue, and as always, I welcome your feedback on the editorial content at editor@immigrantmuse.ca.

Cheers to growth!

Oyin Ajibola

Chief Muser

Send your question to the editor at editor@immigrantmuse.ca.



Make yourself at home with the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP).

Saskatchewan offers all newcomers a high quality of life, a strong sense of community and employment opportunities. With the SINP, you and your family can call Saskatchewan home.

The program allows Saskatchewan to nominate applicants who qualify under SINP criteria to the federal government for permanent residence status. SINP candidates who are still searching for a job offer can receive points for having a close family member in Saskatchewan who will assist in their job search and help them settle in their new community.

Saskatchewan provides an array of supports before and after arrival such as checklists to help newcomers navigate their first days and weeks, language training to help newcomers learn/improve their English and settlement services to help newcomers adjust and succeed in Saskatchewan.

Through the Saskatchewan Immigration Youtube channel, we provide a series of videos about how to apply for the SINP.

For more information on the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP), please visit:

www.saskatchewan.ca/sinp

www.youtube.com/c/saskatchewanimmigration

saskatchewan.ca

Saskatchewan! 

Contributors



Kshama Ranawana

Kshama is a freelance writer, publishing both in Canada and Sri Lanka, her country of birth. She is a contributing columnist to EconomyNext and Counterpoint. Kshama is also a human rights activist with a decade-long commitment to freedom of speech, protection of journalists, freedom of worship, women's rights, and protection of vulnerable communities and the environment. Kshama enjoys writing about the exceptional contributions of immigrants to the growth of Canada. Have a success story to share? Contact Kshama at kshama@immigrantmuse.ca



Katrina Macadaeg

Katrina immigrated to Canada from the Philippines in 2011. She is now a Quality Specialist in the food manufacturing industry. Katrina was a beneficiary of several non-profit organizations so she understands the impact of community involvement to newcomers. She now gives back to her community as a passionate volunteer, mentor, and public speaker. Connect with Katrina at katrina@immigrantmuse.ca



Tom Miller

Tom Miller is a resident of Calgary, Alberta, with roots in Liverpool, England. Over the last 40 years, he has lived across the vast nation of Canada. As an academic and teacher, he focused on providing helpful and enlightening information to as many people as possible, a trait he hopes to bring to his current undertaking as a freelance journalist and blogger. Tom is a lifelong writer, musician, and collector of comics. A recent trip across the country inspired him to revisit his experiences as an immigrant, which led him to write for Immigrant Muse. Share your story with Tom at tom@immigrantmuse.ca.



Carole Sandy

Carole Sandy is a healing navigator, multi-faceted therapist, speaker and educator with over fifteen years of experience assisting people in breaking generational hurts, creating new career possibilities and helping people discover their strengths. Founder of CaroleConsults, where she encourages her clients to stand up to the old narratives holding them captive and honour their emotions in ways they had not done before. Her passion for equity inspired her to create From Invisible to Visible, a community-based organization providing a safe space for marginalized and racialized people to find therapists with similar experiences and stories. Carole graduated from McGill University with a degree in Couple and Family Therapy and Acadia University's Masters in Education Counselling. She hosts The Round Table podcast, which focuses on respectful conversations that help us heal.



Linda Prafke BAC, FCMC

Linda is a Certified Management Consultant, President of BMG Business Management Group, a partner in Bizacademi Training Inc., an authorized Everything DiSC and Five Behaviours Partner. The companies work with individuals and organizations spanning all sectors and industries. With three decades of experience as a coach, facilitator and consultant Linda and her teams have assisted thousands of entrepreneurs start and grow their business through strategic and business planning and developing critical interpersonal skills to be more productive and successful.



Bukky Abaniwonda

Bukky Abaniwonda pivoted from a career in finance into the immigration industry and, in the process, has developed her technical skills, business acumen, and people management skills in a way that has been truly transformative to her career. Bukky has a deep love for providing access and training to the creator ecosystem through acting, directing, filmmaking, and storytelling. Bukky takes the business acumen from her corporate, entrepreneurial, and social impact work into her role at Shirah Migration as the Principal Immigration Consultant. Shirah Migration has helped over 1,000 candidates with a data-driven, supportive process at various stages of their migration.



Adeola Monofi

Adeola is an award-winning Financial Advisor and licensed insurance broker. She is a Financial literacy Enthusiast with a great wealth of knowledge and experience in the financial services industry. She is passionate about helping people attain financial independence through financial education and premium investment strategies. She is also a public speaker, life coach, devoted wife, and mother to two beautiful angels.

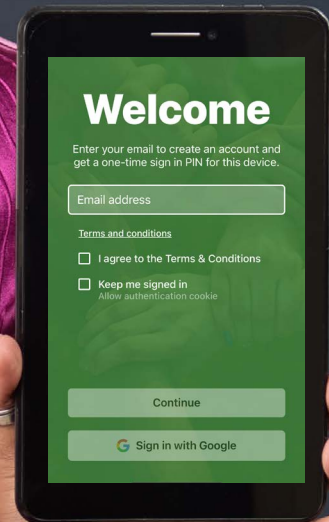


Esther Haastrup

Esther holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Language and enjoys teaching and list researching. She is keen on researching and sharing helpful tools and constantly improving on her writing skills. She's a lover of African Literature, movies and culture; and looks forward to traveling the world, exploring new cities and capturing the moments in beautiful photographs. Contact Esther at esther@immigrantmuse.ca.

Would you like to be a contributor on Immigrant Muse Magazine? Pitch your article idea to the editor at editor@immigrantmuse.ca

iConnect App



For Immigrants

Developed by immigrants for immigrants, iConnect helps you connect to the people and information you need to thrive in Canada, whether you're an international student, permanent resident, refugee claimant, temporary resident or potential immigrant working on your immigration application.

Mission

To make it easy for immigrants to connect, share, and learn within a safe virtual community of like-minded immigrants while staying informed on relevant programs and services to ease their settlement journey.

Download at:

immigrantconnect.app

For Service Providers

Do you have products, programs and services that target newcomers? Whether you're a core settlement service provider, an adjunct organization, an educational institution, or a government agency, iConnect provides the platform to connect with immigrants searching for a program or service like yours.

Create your profile: complete the profile form as accurately as possible to make it easy for immigrants who need your programs and services to find you. As we get more feedback from users, both immigrants and service providers, we'll continue to add more features to iConnect. We anticipate that soon, you'll be able to list and describe some of the programs you want to publicize within your profile to allow for better targeting.

For Private Sector

Do you have a deal that'll appeal to newcomers and immigrants you'd like to share on iConnect? We know that many private organizations have deals and promotions exclusively for immigrants. iConnect allows private organizations to share targeted offers with immigrants based on defined criteria to reach immigrants who can benefit from such offers. Please send us an email at iconnect@immigrantconnect.app to connect with your market.

For support or more information:
iconnect@immigrantconnect.app



A Three-Step Process To Connect

Create Your Profile

Complete the profile form as accurately as possible to get tailored recommendations of programs, services and community updates on your homepage.

Follow Service Providers

Check the directory of service providers listed on the app. You can search by location to see the service providers in your province and follow the ones important to you. When you follow a service provider, you see their updates on your home screen. You might still see the updates of

other service providers you are not following if iConnect determines that it is relevant to you based on your profile. iConnect is still learning to make suitable recommendations; please bear with us if your update screen contains information that doesn't appear relevant to you. We'll keep improving with your feedback.

Join Communities

Communities are either interest-based or location-based. You want to ensure you join a good mix of communities to connect with other immigrants with the same interest or who reside or plan to migrate to your province.

You don't want to miss any juicy information shared in the community. You can also share updates with community members. Ask questions or share information in any community you join ANONYMOUSLY. If you're uncomfortable sharing your identity, hit the anonymous button and share away.

Leave a Feedback

Want to leave us feedback to help us improve the app or join our testers? Please email us at iconnect@immigrantconnect.app or do it right from the app.





Dear Diaspora Child

By Cicely Belle Blain

it's okay if you only learned about your culture
from Google

it's okay if you only read your language at the
public library

it's okay if you need books to know your
ancestral recipes

it's okay if you've never even set foot on the soil
of your people

it's okay if your hips don't sway to those rhythms

it's okay if the food is too bitter for your tongue

it's okay if English is the only language that flows
freely from your mouth

it's okay if your wardrobe is just jeans and Ts

it's okay if you only know Shakespeare

it's okay if spice brings you fear instead of joy

it's okay if you understand but can't reply

it's okay if you dread the disappointed stares of
aunties

it's okay if small words like Salaam alaykum fall
from your tongue like broken bones

it's okay if you spent your whole life shunning it all,
only to now want it back

you are no less worthy

it is no less home

Love always,

CB

MENTORING



A NEW INITIATIVE AIMS FOR EXCELLENCE IN MENTORING

It all began as a conversation between Bruce Randall of Calgary Region Immigrant Employment Council (CRIEC) and Fairborz Birjandian of Calgary Catholic Immigration Services (CCIS). Then a vision was born that led to the co-creation of the Prairie Centre for Excellence in Mentoring by these two organizations that provide services and programs to immigrants in the Calgary region.

“We know career mentoring is an effective tool to support immigrants to transition their careers to Canada...we wanted to create an eco-system of mentoring across the prairies and northern territories to support immigrants to find career-worthy employment and thrive so they could become even more accessible to immigrants”, says Bruce Randall

Prairie Centre for Excellence in Mentoring is a new initiative launched in 2022 to improve outcomes for newcomer mentees and mentors by creating new knowledge and practical resources for organizations offering mentoring programs. In its first stage, the project focuses on researching and developing an employer engagement toolkit for organizations offering employment mentoring.

Many immigrant-serving organizations offer career mentorship programs that match newcomers with established immigrants or Canadian-born mentors in similar careers to learn about the Canadian work culture and transition into their occupations in Canada. Recruiting mentors is the biggest challenge for career mentorship

programs. The employer engagement toolkit will address that challenge and increase the number of employers or businesses participating in mentoring programs.

Across Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nunavut and the NorthWest Territories, the relationship between mentors and mentees can become a two-way street. Mentors share their knowledge and experience working in their profession or industry, and mentees share their knowledge and expertise from their careers and their experiences seeking work in Canada. Most of the employers in these provinces are small or medium enterprises that often look outside their community to find skilled talents to fill their labour needs.

A career mentoring relationship helps immigrants decode the needs and expectations of employers, open up access to the hidden job market and develop an understanding of what adapting to the Canadian workplace can mean in terms of business language and culture, as well as less often expressed Canadian cultural expectations. Mentors can learn how to better communicate with and support skilled talents in their profession or industry and develop a deeper understanding of what internationally educated talents bring to the Canadian workforce.

“We know it is a win-win kind of relationship that supports connecting skilled newcomers to individuals working in their field and employers to skilled talents”, adds Bruce Randall.



To learn more about the Prairie Center for Excellence in Mentoring visit:

<https://www.criec.ca/prairie-centre-for-excellence-in-mentoring/>

<https://www.ccisab.ca/professionals-job-seekers/mentoring.html>



INVISIBLE IMMIGRANTS

By Tom Miller

The Miller Clan, second generation.
Photo Credit: Tara Miller

This is a very difficult piece for me to write.

My name is Tom. I'm 48 years old, 6 feet tall, bearded, large white male. And I'm an immigrant. But I don't look or sound like one. I am one of the 8.3 million people who immigrated to Canada and make up about 23 per cent of the population, according to Statistics Canada's 2021 census result.

I moved to Canada in 1980, at six years old, to Richmond, BC, 7294 kilometres away from my birthplace of Ormskirk, England, just outside of the port city of Liverpool. My family only had a few work friends for support. Little Tom, sounding like an English version of Mickey Mouse, began navigating a new country and culture that has brought me, 42 years later, to writing this article or open letter to you.

I am what I've started calling an "Invisible Immigrant." A few years ago, when I was teaching at the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA), I realized that the invisible immigrant was a demographic that needed attention. The ladies in my class hailed from all over the world, from East Asia to the Middle East to Eastern Europe. One of them made a comment about me that stirred emotions I didn't know I had. They assumed that I was a Canadian-born straight Christian. To those ladies, that was what a tall, white, male-looking person was. But I am none of those things. According to Statistics Canada, from "2016 to 2021, Canada's population living in private households grew by 5.4%, and new, or recent, immigrants accounted for 71.1% of that growth." This translates to approximately 1.3 million immigrants "admitted from January 1, 2016 to May 11, 2021."

While some may have been People of Colour, a huge number were likely not.

Before you take out your pitchforks, slings, and arrows, let me explain. When people talk publicly about immigrants, they refer to non-white people who move to the country. Not one person in my life over the last 20 years has asked, "where are you from?" based on nothing but my skin colour. Only occasionally, when I get excited or angry, do people notice my slight English accent. When I told the ladies in my class that, no, I was neither born here, nor a Christian, nor straight, I shifted things for them, hopefully in a good way.

There are many places in the world where most of the population is Caucasian and English is the primary or at least a common language. But if you're white, and you speak English fluently, you don't tend to fall into

the category of “immigrant” in the same way that the term is used in most public discourse. People simply assume that your transition will be smooth and you won’t need much help.

For the most part, this is the case. When you move to a country where you physically resemble the dominant demographic and can communicate fluently in the official language, you have already won half the battle of settling in. But you will still run up against some other challenges. For instance, even though you were educated at an institution that teaches primarily in English, your foreign qualifications may not be accepted in another country, just like many non-White immigrant professionals. You still require some aid and support in a new country.

A dear friend once told me about the difficulties his stepfather experienced when he first moved to Canada from the Netherlands. The father was a tall white man with a decent command of English, though far from fluent. One of his stumbling blocks was the word ‘drag’, which means to pull something that is likely resisting the pull. Imagine his reaction when he heard this sentence: “A drag queen dragged me outside and offered me a drag of her cigarette. What a drag!” Given the numerous ways ‘drag’ is used, my friend’s stepfather was very confused when offered a “drag of a cigarette.”

Similarly, my mother, a small, white, English woman, told me that there was an expectation that she shouldn’t need to ask questions about how things worked because, well, she was white and spoke English, so surely moving from England to Canada wasn’t such a hardship. However, 40 years ago in England, you only had to submit tax returns after major life events such as marriage or a new birth. My parents had no idea that it was a yearly practice in Canada. And if I were to say the words “lorry,” “boot,” “flat,” or “chips,” they’d have very different

meanings to someone from England versus someone from Canada. Indeed, the word “lorry” (meaning dump truck) doesn’t even exist in Canada, and you get a few raised eyebrows when you use it.

Immigrants from the United States, Poland, or England, may not have language challenges. They may fit into the dominant demographic in Canada. But there are stumbling blocks that these invisible immigrants

There are many places in the world where most of the population is Caucasian and English is the primary or at least a common language. But if you’re white, and you speak English fluently, you don’t tend to fall into the category of “immigrant” in the same way that the term is used in most public discourse. People simply assume that your transition will be smooth and you won’t need much help.

I am certainly not equating the



The Miller Clan arrived in Canada, 1980.
Photo Credit: Tom Miller (Sr.)

difficulties that People of Colour have when immigrating with those that White immigrants have. We sadly still live in a world where skin colour can lead to detrimental treatment, especially when you’re a newly arrived immigrant. There is a whole other level of visible difficulties that POC have to deal with, one that White immigrants, for the most part, avoid. This is not fair or right, but it is how things currently are. All we can do is try to change the environment.

are expected to either know about or know how to deal with without any help, solely because of their skin colour.

When I was teaching at CIWA, one White lady from Eastern Europe was in my class. I wish I had had the foresight to ask about her experience. I wish I had engaged the whole class in this kind of dialogue, but it was well outside the purview of the course I was teaching.

Immigrant Muse’s goal is to offer information and assistance to those just beginning their lives in Canada. Indeed, that is the mandate of every immigrant assistance association, fund, or website. But there is an unvoiced expectation that if you are White, you’re somehow implicitly

equipped to function in a completely different culture where the skin colour is predominantly White. The cultures of Canada and Norway are quite different. Assuming that a Norwegian immigrant will fit in fine and fluidly into the Canadian culture simply by dint of their skin tone is a sure way to guarantee a difficult and stressful transition to a new country.



New Immigration Streams Provide Clarity on the Direction of Alberta Immigration

By Bukky Abaniwonda



In April 2022, Alberta introduced the Alberta Advantage Immigration Program (AAIP), a new stream to attract immigrants from overseas or other provinces. The Alberta Tech Pathway, one of the seven streams of this program, gained the most popularity over the last few months and placed Alberta on the lips of potential immigrants considering Canada.

There are two main streams under the AAIP with sub-streams. AAIP replaced the Alberta Immigrant Nominee program, which could have been more effective if Alberta Immigration had been transparent with the occupations in demand, nomination requirements and process. While there were speculations based on the history of people who were invited, those who presumably should have been invited based on family ties and stronger points were not considered. This new AAIP is a welcome development. As with all immigration programs, this stream's goal is economic growth by filling job shortages or supporting those planning to buy or start a business in Alberta.

Worker Streams

This stream is for foreign workers

living and working in Alberta or who plan to live and work in the province. The substreams under this stream are:

Alberta Opportunity Stream:

Qualified candidates who live and work in Alberta and have a job offer from an Alberta employer can apply for an AAIP nomination under this stream.

Alberta Express Entry Stream (also known as Accelerated Tech Pathway):

This stream is for qualified candidates with an Express Entry Cumulative Ranking System (CRS) score of at least 300 points with a job offer. Candidates with a job offer from an employer considered to be in the Tech industry can qualify for expedited processing under the Accelerated Tech Pathway.

Rural Renewal Stream: Qualified candidates who have a job offer from an Alberta employer to work in a designated rural Alberta community can apply for AAIP nomination.

Entrepreneur Streams

There are four sub-streams for entrepreneurs who plan to live in Alberta and buy or start a business in the province. They are:

Rural Entrepreneur Stream: Entrepreneurs who want to start a

business or buy an existing business in a rural Alberta community can submit an Expression of Interest (EOI).

Graduate Entrepreneur Stream: International graduates of approved Alberta post-secondary institutions who want to start a business or buy an existing business can submit an Expression of Interest (EOI).

Farm Stream: Experienced farmers who plan to buy or start a farm in Alberta can apply for permanent residency.

Foreign Graduate Entrepreneur Stream: Foreign graduates outside Canada may apply for permanent residency under this stream if they are entrepreneurs and meet the eligibility requirements.

Foreign nationals temporarily living in other provinces can also become permanent residents through these streams. However, the suitable pathway for potential immigrants depends on whether they have job offers or money to invest in a business. To successfully navigate these pathways, potential immigrants require a lot of research, networking and consultation with licensed immigration professionals to secure a nomination.



Three Life Insurance Myths Debunked

By Adeola Monofi

Tosan knows it is essential to plan for major life events, but she doesn't know that a life insurance policy is one of the most important financial planning tools she can utilize to secure her financial future and those of her loved ones.



Her Financial Advisor had mentioned the topic of having a life insurance policy several times. She wasn't interested as she felt she was young and hadn't accumulated substantial wealth. Tosan thinks that life insurance shouldn't even be a priority. Recently, she had another discussion with her advisor, and she's grateful she did.

Here is what she learnt:

Myth 1: Life insurance is only useful after my death.

Fact: Permanent life insurance offers many benefits that can help you build a nest egg and make you financially independent in future and at retirement.

Myth 2: I have life insurance at my job; I don't need another policy.

Fact: Your employer only covers you when employed with the company. The policy gets terminated once you leave or retire. The coverage is usually limited and may not be

enough to cover your family's future needs. Also, the only type of coverage employers provide is term insurance which only pays out a death benefit should you pass away before 65. If life is long, you may be stranded when you need coverage the most. It's best to have a life policy customized for your future needs.

Myth 3: I don't need life insurance if I am young, single and healthy.

Fact: The best time to get life insurance is when you are young and healthy. You can lock in your insurability with good health. Also, the younger you are, the cheaper your premium rates and the more time your investments have to grow and earn compound interest.

Tosan is surprised that her previous knowledge about life insurance was based on misconceptions. Now that she has the fact, she's happy to get the life insurance policy that's right for her.





Education Programs to Integrate Newcomer Students and Families in Calgary

By Tom Miller

Although it is not always requisite, it is a good idea to have at least a basic command of the official language(s) of your new country when migrating. Many adult immigrants have likely had the opportunity to pick up a few helpful phrases here and there. But as any new immigrant will agree, a few helpful phrases are not nearly enough to survive. A command of a new language, in Canada's case, English and/or French, is vital to navigating the institutions of a new country. Migrating to a new country is a stressful and anxiety-ridden process, but as grown-ups, we're expected to be able to deal with the stress.

What about young immigrants, though? How do we prepare a child,

already in a very vulnerable position, for life in a country where the language and culture may be quite different and alienating? The Calgary Board of Education (CBE), in Alberta, offers a wide range of programs aimed at assisting young newcomers regardless of their educational level and familiarity with Canada. The CBE offers three programs specifically for students (and their families) who need help with any of Canada's official languages and Culture. The Cultural and Linguistic Support, English Language Learners, and Interpretation Services programs fall under the broad category of Supports for Students, and they cover a range of topics and skill levels to accommodate each student that enters the Calgary school system.

Of the 125,000 students enrolled in the system, the CBE website notes that "about one-quarter... are identified as English Language Learners." According to statistics gathered by Dr. Hetty Roessingh and Carla Johnson of the University of Calgary, a native English speaker should have a vocabulary of around 100,000 words by the age of 18. In contrast, a senior high school English as a Second Language (ESL) student is expected to have a vocabulary of about 24,000 words - this is less than a quarter of the requirement for a native speaker. This highlights the importance of offering immersive English language and Canadian culture programs to all levels of learners. According to CBE's website, the school board assess learners



when they first enter the school system and offer programs “based on their ESL coding and language assessment.”

In its information package, the board suggests that students speak their original language at home. The Keep Your Home Language Alive! document shares that maintaining one’s original language can make it easier to learn a new language. The retention of an original language, and the culture that accompanies it encourages a more global perspective in young learners. The influence of cultures on one another is the foundation for Canada’s attempts at multiculturalism, and the future of the multicultural project rests on young people with a wide perspective of the world.

Aside from the standard in-class ESL instruction, the CBE also offers the Literacy, English and Academic Development (L.E.A.D) Program. The program is for students whose educational life has been rife with interruptions and additional

challenges. These students’ education paths may have been derailed by unrest or conflict in their home countries, or, as the Board suggests, a “lack of opportunity for

The board suggests that students speak their original language at home... maintaining one’s original language can make it easier to learn a new language. The retention of an original language, and the culture that accompanies it encourages a more global perspective in young learners.

prior schooling.” For these students, circumstances well outside of their control have left them behind other students of the same age. CBE’s intensive program seeks to help these learners reach their full educational potential. L.E.A.D. classes are much smaller than regular classes, and they focus on elevating the learner to a level where they can integrate into a regular classroom and continue their ESL instruction at a level appropriate for their age.

For newcomers, young and old alike,

it is not just the language that can create difficulties. The CBE offers Cultural and Linguistic Support to students and their families to assist in navigating Canadian culture. While Canada is a generally very open and welcoming culture, there may be some practices that are foreign to newcomers, and some cultural practices that do not integrate into Canadian culture. This is not to say that cultural practices from immigrants’ home country should be immediately dropped upon immigrating to Canada. On the contrary, CBE’s cultural support program helps newcomers enrich their traditional practices with the influence of their new country.

In offering this program to students and their families, CBE helps new Canadians to “get to know our schools and our system, and to feel at home with us.” It is important for parents to feel that their child is getting the best, most appropriate care and education outside of the home. CBE’s diversity and support programs ensure that students and their families are informed and comfortable in their relationship with their chosen school.



The influence of cultures on one another is the foundation for Canada's attempts at multiculturalism, and the future of the multicultural project rests on young people with a wide perspective of the world.

On cultural education and integration, CBE's Communications Advisor, Kara Layher, highlights a partnership with the Calgary Bridge Foundation for the Youth (CBFY). CBFY is an independent organization that works with the CBE to support "immigrant and refugee youth and their families with knowledge and information about Canadian culture and [the] schooling system." With offices in CBE and Calgary Catholic District reception centres, CBFY facilitates the growth of immigrant children while also ensuring that they understand the peculiarities of Canadian culture.

Further, CBE also employs more than 132 interpreters who provide interpretation and translation support in 41 languages. Interpreters are available to assist both students and their caregivers in communicating clearly with teachers and other staff. As CBE's website notes, "having an interpreter at a meeting will improve everyone's understanding of the discussion."





It is a cliché that it is hard to be a woman or a female-presenting person nowadays. In Canada, it's only just over 100 years that women have been recognized as "persons" under the law. For trans women and non-binary people, that struggle is just beginning. Immigrant women often struggle to access reliable, trustworthy settlement information and support. In Calgary, Alberta, the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) alleviate this struggle.

CIWA recognizes many difficulties in being an immigrant and fills the gaps in information to ensure the tools presented to newcomers are helpful. Founded in 1982, the organization offers various services to newcomer women and girls in Canada, especially helping them understand Canadian culture's subtleties, whether social, business, or economic. CIWA's services range from language and literacy programs to entrepreneurship training.

Fatima Narvaez, CIWA's communications manager, highlights the targeted and wraparound programs offered by CIWA as "helping alleviate the challenges as well as shorten the settlement transition period for many women and families."

Located in downtown Calgary, just steps from the Bow River, CIWA's office hosts the CIWA Business

Centre, where newcomers can access the internet, make photocopies, take passport photos, and many other services vital to settling in a new country.

CIWA's website notes that the association serves women from over 140 countries, with 45 per cent having a Bachelor's degree. CIWA assists these foreign-trained professionals with credential evaluation and upgrades where necessary. At the other end of the spectrum, over 30 per cent of women [who come to CIWA] have less than 12 years of education. In these cases, CIWA offers intensive training and education, with local partners like Bow Valley College to provide Early Childhood Education programs.

CIWA also delivers programs for women who may be experiencing domestic abuse. The Champions for Victims of Family Violence, and the Family Conflict Prevention programs offer resources to women whose domestic situations are complicated or outright dangerous, including a series of short videos outlining available services.

Arriving in a new country can be an alienating experience for many women who are often left to care for children while their partner is out trying to secure a job. CIWA reduces this isolation and alienation to make newcomer women feel safe and secure in their new environment.

"I was fortunate to attend some workshops and networking events organized by CIWA," says Lem in a Facebook comment. "I came off feeling enriched with valuable information and confident with the quality of connections I was able to make."

In a video testimony, Gloria offers a moving tribute to the importance of the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association: "When I first moved to Canada, my life changed. I was stuck in a part-time job on a minimum wage." After receiving a large tax debt, Gloria says, "I carried the weight of the world on my shoulders. I felt hopeless...I was referred to CIWA where I met my counsellor. She supported me, gave me resources... (and) hope to continue my journey." These testimonies embody CIWA's mandate to empower immigrant women and girls to be strong and independent in their new country, give them the skills and resources to build a life, and ultimately help build the country.

Fatima Narvaez reveals that moving forward, CIWA "will be working on developing partnerships nationwide to help bridge the gap for gender-specific and culturally sensitive services." This National Visibility mandate will be CIWA's priority over the next five years.





EIGHT THINGS IMMIGRANTS DISLIKE ABOUT CANADA

By Oyin Ajibola

There are many things immigrants love in and about Canada. After all, they chose Canada as their new home despite many contending options. However, a few things are on the list of reasons why immigrants sometimes wonder what they are doing in Canada. Immigrant Muse asked immigrants what they do not like about Canada and generated this list from their responses.

01 Long Winter

Canada's long and depressing winter tops the list for many immigrants. This is not surprising as most immigrants are from countries with temperate weather.



"The only thing I hate about Canada is the long winter" - Adeola, AB

"Canada would be the perfect country if winter was as short as summer and summer as long as winter" - Priyanka, NS

"When I first heard about Canada's winter, I never imagined it could be this cold until I experienced it. The overwhelming sadness that accompanies winter season makes it suck even more" - Jeremiah, SK

"I find myself asking what I'm still doing here every winter" - Zeal, Yukon

02 High Cost Of Living

According to World Data, Canada is the 18th most expensive country in the world, with Vancouver as the most expensive city in Canada. It is estimated that more than 50 per cent of Canadians spend more than 80 per cent of their income on necessities, leaving them little to spend on pleasures and savings for the future. The increasing cost of living and inflation only makes it worse. A recent CBC report shows that many Canadians are afraid they may not be able to afford their basic needs anymore. To help with the increasing cost of living, the Saskatchewan government recently paid a one-time affordability credit of \$500 to everyone 18 years and above who file taxes in Saskatchewan in 2021.



"When I first saw the proof of funds required to live in Canada for six months, I imagined it was exaggerated because I didn't think the cost of living could be that expensive. I'm shocked at how fast my proof of funds drained just from buying my basic needs. No wonder most immigrants settle for survival jobs to pay the bills." - Ishmael, BC

"Living cost is annoyingly expensive in Canada." - Neo, NS

"The bills here can make one go crazy with worry." - Ishmael, ON

03 Inter-Provincial Disconnect

Canada is a country with ten provinces and three territories. Each province makes laws, policies and rules on provincial taxation, healthcare, education, business registrations, and natural resources, amongst others. As a result, laws and systems in one province may not apply in another. This creates a disconnect and can make relocating across provinces a new learning curve. For example, the goods and services tax (GST) differs from one province to another. In New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Prince Edward Island, the GST has been blended with the provincial sales tax and is called the harmonized sales tax (HST). However, these provinces charge different rates. While Alberta, Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon do not charge a provincial sales tax aside from the federal GST of 5 per cent, other provinces charge anything from 6 per cent to 10 per cent in addition to the federal GST. Learning these differences is difficult enough for people travelling through the provinces and even more so when someone needs to move to another province.



“When I moved from Toronto, ON to Saskatoon, SK, it felt like I moved to another country. I had to unlearn and relearn many things.” – Muiyiwa, SK

“It was tough when I first moved from Alberta to British Columbia. I knew life would be more expensive, but I hadn’t thought about the extra cost of buying basic things because of the additional taxes I never paid in Alberta. My budget never worked.” – Mina, BC

“Each time I go on a road trip to Alberta, I buy a trunk load of groceries because of the sales tax” – Keela, BC

04 Healthcare Wait Time

Canadians brag about the free healthcare in Canada, but the other side most people outside Canada do not often see is the long wait time. Long wait time applies not only to emergency room visits but also to surgical procedures, finding a family doctor, and even a regular visit to a clinic. According to data published by Ontario Health in August 2022, the average emergency room wait time in Ontario for July was 20.7 hours.



“I went to emergency recently at 2 pm and didn’t get to see a doctor until 1 am. After the doctor checked me and requested blood work, a nurse said my COVID test result returned positive. I was shocked because I did not take a COVID test. The nurse realized I was the wrong patient. It just made me realize how overworked healthcare workers were. Many of them were complaining about how they were forced to take double shifts.” – Masha, ON

“I have been waiting for over three years to do a minor procedure affecting the quality of my life. I’ve decided to go back to my home country for the procedure. I wish there were also private healthcare that we could pay for in Canada. Free public healthcare is not so effective.” – JJ, SK

“Going to the ER when you’re not at the point of death is a waste of time because they won’t attend to you until you get to that point.” – Nichola, NB

“Still waiting to find a family doctor for five years.” – Monique, AB

05 Racism and Discrimination

Canadians are generally lovely people, but there are still confirmed cases of passive aggressiveness, racism and discrimination across the country. Many of these are based on racial, religious, or sexual biases. Canada has a long history of discrimination against the Aboriginal, Asian, and Black peoples. Recently, there have been religious-motivated killings of Muslims in Alberta, racially motivated harassment of Asians and police brutality against Black people that have led to numerous protests across Canada. While these are overt, immigrants express that the covert cases are the ones that hurt the most.



“I work as a recruiter and have seen many hiring managers disqualify great job applicants just because of their names. That hurts because I know that it could be me.” – Zee, SK

“It makes me cringe when people meet me for the first time and ask where I’m from originally. Heck, I’m from Canada. I was born and raised here.” – Nathan, NB

“I once went for an in-person job interview after a telephone interview that went well. The hiring manager and I hit it off over the phone like buddies, only to meet in person, and he was so cold. I could tell it was because he did not expect me to be black.” – Maya, AB

“I like that Canadians try to be nice in public even when they don’t like you and can be mean when you’re alone with them. I’ve had my fair share and get pretty anxious when I’m alone with white Canadians.” – Antonio, BC

06 Unreliable Transport System in Small Cities

If you live in large metropolitan cities like Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal and Calgary, you can decide not to have a private means of transport and entirely depend on public transit. Large cities have dependable transit systems with buses, trains and boats here necessary. But this is different in smaller cities. As a result, to avoid missing or being late for appointments or, worse still, getting stranded on cold winter days or hot summer days, you must have a personal vehicle, whether that’s a car, motorcycle or bicycle. It even becomes more difficult when you have to make inter-city trips. Public transit for inter-city trips is usually very infrequent, if available.



“I would love to go visit my family in Saskatoon often, but it’s always a nightmare because something always tends to go wrong with the buses from Moose-Jaw to Saskatoon or back.” – TE, SK

“When my family first came to Canada, we often missed appointments because we had no car to move around easily. You can guess the first major purchase we made in Canada even when we weren’t ready for it.” – Bayo, NS

“If you’re going to live in any city other than Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Calgary, then be prepared to buy a car as soon as you land. That’s going to save you a whole lot of stress. I’ve lived in 5 provinces in the last seven years, so I know.” – Bundy, BC

07 Underemployment

According to a 2014 Report from the Panel on Employment Challenges of New Canadians, “New Canadians hold a disproportionate number of graduate degrees, accounting for nearly half (49%) of all PhDs and 40% of master’s recipients. Despite their qualifications, skilled immigrants are chronically underemployed.”



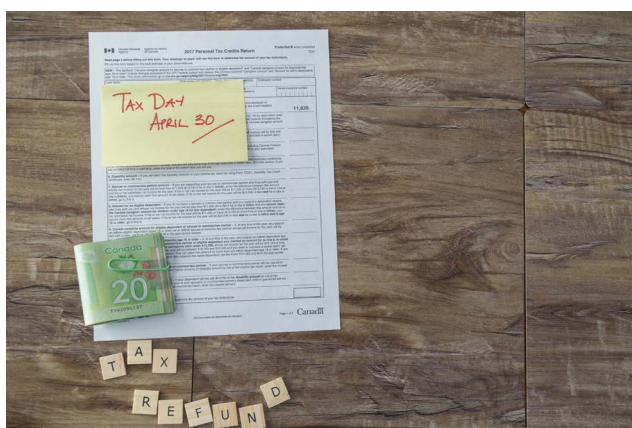
“The economic immigration system makes immigrants believe that there are tons of jobs available for the qualification and skillsets that immigrants bring to Canada. Sadly, immigrants have to take jobs that are way below their qualification and skillsets, and that can be frustrating.” – Boye, PEI

*“Don’t even get me started on the Canadian experience bulls**t that employers are always looking for.” – Moscow, ON*

“Canada say they need healthcare workers but have they tried to count the number of foreign-trained doctors and nurses working at groceries stores, restaurants, transport companies and care home?” – Bill, BC

08 Taxes

Many immigrants have expressed shock over the high tax rate in Canada. They get their first job in Canada and make assumptions about their net income after tax deductions, only to get a rude awakening when they receive their pay stubs. They had not imagined they’d be paying that much income tax. From income tax to goods and services tax and property tax, every Canadian feels the pinch of taxes that jolts them to reality and forces an equitable distribution of wealth in Canada. Nonetheless, these high taxes are one of the reasons the government can provide many social services and benefits to Canadians.



“I don’t blame people that don’t want to take higher-paying jobs. The bulk of the money goes to the government in taxes.” – Shahira, ON

“When I see the taxes I pay at the end of each tax season, I get upset.” – Daniel, NS

“Taxes are high, but that’s the reason I get free healthcare, and public schools are free, so I can’t complain, can I?” – Aram, AB



Although immigrants do not like these things about Canada just like most Canadian-born citizens, they make the best of their lives in Canada and find joy in the things they love about Canada.



Writing From the Margins:

LETTERS TO SINGAPORE

By Kelly Kaur

I never thought it was possible to write my novel, the one that I had been dreaming about all my life. It was too hard. I didn't know how to start. I didn't have time. I needed my imaginary house in the Rockies with a view of the mountains to be inspired. I had a million excuses, and the years flew by seamlessly and unforgivingly. No novel!

Then, my vision found a germinating seed. I was accepted into a four-month writing program by the Writers' Guild of Alberta and Alexandra's Writers' Centre in 2019. I was thrilled and inspired, especially when I found out that my mentor was the marvelous Aritha van Herk. Electrified, nervous, and determined, I ecstatically finished this novel in 100 days. This became a creative journey of possibilities for me, after facing so many roadblocks.

I didn't know much; I just wrote and wrote. One letter became two, and the stories took on a life of their own. I delved into the unknown intricacies of being a new writer, letting each day take me down mysterious paths of creativity, marbled by fear, joy, doubt, and questions. Out of the chaos, the voices of the women carved their niche and bellowed through me as I wrote their characters to life.

Letters to Singapore takes place in Calgary, Canada and Singapore. The protagonist, Simran is a new international student at the University of Calgary. Bewildered and alone, she arrives in Calgary (the West) from Singapore (the East). Simran sends letters that go back and forth to four women in Singapore: her mother, sister, a Chinese friend, and a Tamil friend. She learns about surviving in a

new city, new country and new "everything,"

As a newcomer in Canada, Simran goes through a rollercoaster of emotions and must reconcile her eastern values with her new-found western ones. She is inexperienced in all matters of love and life and being on her own in a new country is exhilarating, painful, difficult, and hopeful, all at the same time. Simran struggles with and against the idea of patriarchal, societal, and cultural expectations. How do immigrants adapt? What is the price of freedom, and what do women deserve – those

are questions Simran struggles to answer all the time.

Who are these women in my novel? I am a keen observer of life. I watch

people and ask questions. Therefore, this novel has bits and pieces about many people I know or have heard about. I loved my renewed ability to weave stories and create characters out of what was real, imagined, and crafted. These women in Letters to Singapore are authentic, raw, and alive. I know them well, and many readers have found a character in the novel they most resonate with – mother, mistreated wife, independent woman, lost soul, or all of them.

My first novel, Letters to Singapore, gave me the confidence and the courage to write more. As I hold this impossible novel of my imagination in my hands, I know it's never too late to dream big. Stories are powerful tools for reconciliation, hope and possibilities, both for the author and the readers. I am grateful I never gave up!





End of the Rainbow Foundation Welcomes LGBTQ+ Newcomers to Calgary

By Tom Miller

Immigrants move to a new country for many reasons. For some, it is simply a desire to experience a new culture and live in an unfamiliar place. For others, it is pursuing financial stability, the great promise of North America for well over 100 years now. Others, however, leave their country of origin for much less benign reasons, escaping violence and persecution to seek refuge in a new country. We call such people “refugees” to distinguish them from other immigrants.

Statistics Canada’s 2021 census result reveals that approximately 1 million Canadians came into the country as refugees. Among these refugees are individuals who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+), often fleeing an unwelcoming or dangerous country. The last person criminally charged for homosexual practices in Canada was Everett Klippert in 1967. Since 2005, all sexual and gender identifications and same-sex marriages have been recognized in Canada. But this is not the case in many countries, where it is not only illegal to express non-heteronormative gender and sexual identities, but such identifications can result in physical violence or death. This is one of the reasons many seek refuge in a more welcoming country and why organizations like the End of the Rainbow Foundation exist.

This Calgary-based non-profit organization was founded in 2018 to support LGBTQ+ newcomers. Located in downtown Calgary at the CommunityWise Resource Centre, the foundation runs the Calgary LGBTQ+ Refugee Centre. Their services provide a safe and welcoming space for vulnerable immigrants who come from places where their sexual or gender identity has either been lived in secret or publicly decried by the government and society. Those who arrive at the End of the Rainbow are welcomed with open arms, open minds, and a city and community invested in caring for their newly-arrived counterparts.

End of the Rainbow programs accommodates different kinds of queer newcomers. The LGBTQ+ Newcomers Group is a meet-up for newcomers with some meetings

at fun locations around the city. This group introduces those new to Calgary to its vibrant social life and many attractions. The foundation also has other groups such as TransJourneys, TransFamilies Calgary, and Positive Spaces specifically for transgender newcomers, whose journeys and issues are likely more fraught than most cisgendered queer folk. Further, for those entering the country seeking refugee status, the foundation’s volunteers can assist with paperwork and hearings for LGBTQ+ newcomers with precarious circumstances.

Elliot Dewhirst, the foundation’s coordinator, describes the organization as creating “safety, belonging and community for LGBTQ+ folks from across the globe.” He further notes that “community building is a reciprocal process, and many people who access our services...stay involved both as participants,” while others find ways of contributing to the broader queer community.

During 2022 Pride month, Dewhirst shares that “refugees from our program were Marshalls” leading the Calgary celebration and volunteers with the organization marched in the parade with End of the Rainbow. Dewhirst recalls one individual approaching him afterwards, crying and smiling all at once. “They gave me a big hug,” remembers Dewhirst, “and said thank you for making space for us to join; it just means so much.” He adds that it is “important that people see themselves as part of the community, and that they are invited into the community, and can recognize that they too belong.”

Calgary has a vibrant LGBTQ+ community, with events happening throughout the year and the annual celebration of Pride at the beginning of September. Honourable Jyoti Gondek, Calgary’s current mayor, is a vocal community supporter. In a Facebook post in 2020, after a unanimous vote banning conversion therapy in the city, she wrote, “we shouldn’t have to fight against harmful practices that promote shame, self-doubt and self-harm.” For an LGBTQ+ newcomer, it must be astounding to see not only a leader who values their identity but also an organization that wishes to see them settled and happy.



Canada Increases the Candidate Pool for the International Experience Program

By Kshama Ranawana

In yet another bid to manage the current labour shortage, Canada has increased the applicant pool of its International Experience Canada (IEC) program by 20 per cent. When the program reopens on January 9, 2023, 15,000 more candidates can add their profiles to the applicant pool.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) states that the increase will see nearly 90,000 candidates working in the country. Announcing the increase, Sean Fraser, Minister in charge of immigration, noted that the “government is helping more international youth to work and travel in Canada, effectively helping employers, most of those in the tourism industry, find the workers they need. By giving youth the opportunity of international travel and work experience, we are strengthening our economy and helping our businesses succeed.”

IEC is a reciprocal program which allows citizens of 36 partnering countries to work and travel in Canada and vice versa. The period of employment varies between 12 months to two years, depending on the country. To be eligible, candidates must be between 18 and 35 years of age, although in some countries, the upper age limit is 30. If a partnership agreement is not in place, those interested in the program can apply through Recognized Organizations (ROs) listed on IEC’s website. Once in the pool, IRCC selects candidates and invites them to apply for one of the three program categories of their choice within 20 days and request a work permit.

Program Categories

1. Working Holiday: This category allows successful candidates to work for any employer, anywhere in Canada. Candidates do not require a job offer and are

issued an open work permit. The tourism and hospitality sectors are popular in this category, as employers are open to hiring on a short-term basis.

2. Young Professionals: Those applying under this category must prove that their employment in Canada will contribute to their professional development. The job must be related to their field of study or career, classified under the Training, Education, Experience, and Responsibilities (TEER) and listed in the 0,1,2,3 categories of the National Occupation Classifications (NOC). Candidates are issued an employer-specific work permit and are allowed to work only for that employer and at a single location.

3. International Co-op (Internship): Similar to the Young Professionals category, candidates must have an employer-specific work permit, and employment must align with their program of study.

Depending on each province or territory’s labour codes, candidates may or may not receive a wage. Unlike the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, employers hiring through this program do not require a Labor Market Impact Assessment (LMIA).

While the number of candidates picked from each country depends on the quota allocated to that country and category, the IEC program does not lead to permanent residency in Canada.

Apart from providing valuable work experience and meeting Canada’s labour shortage, IEC offers an opportunity for youths to learn and understand different cultures, languages and life skills. **IM**



International Students to Help Fill Labour Shortage with Full Time Work Hours

By Kshama Ranawana

A shrinking unemployment rate and an increasing labor shortage have resulted in Canada relaxing its rules on off-campus work for international students.

Early October, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (IRCC), Sean Fraser announced the launch of a pilot project which will allow international students to work off-campus more than 20 hours a week during the semester. The pilot project will run from November 15 this year to December 31, 2023.

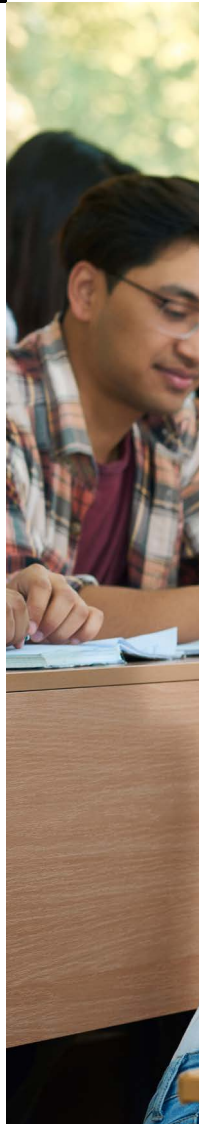
Fraser estimates that around 500,000 students would benefit from the pilot project. Under the 20-hour off-campus cap, international students could work more hours only during scheduled breaks of the educational institute they were enrolled in. At such times, students were allowed to work full-time, overtime or hold two part-time jobs.

Michelle Carbert, Spokesperson and Communications Advisor for IRCC told Immigrant Muse that “to be eligible to work more than 20

hours per week during that period, the study permit holder must be authorized to work off-campus and either already be in Canada, or have applied for a study permit by October 7, 2022.” She explained that the “off-campus work authorization that international students are eligible for is an ‘open’ authorization. This means they are eligible to work for nearly any employer in Canada.”

A Statistics Canada report indicates there were a million vacancies in the second quarter of 2022, and states that “the unemployment-job-vacancy ratio in Canada is at a historical low, amid a record tight labor market.” This means that employers are facing difficulties in recruiting staff and taking longer to fill vacant positions.

One of the main factors contributing to the labor shortage in Canada is that a fair proportion of the working population is reaching retirement age. Also, other workers have resigned from their jobs due to burnout or family situations. Those who lost their jobs in industries impacted by COVID-19



pandemic have moved on to other industries, resulting in many vacancies in those industries in the post-pandemic era. COVID also slowed down the immigration process, reducing the number of newcomers willing to take up survival jobs.

While the government attempts to create a win-win situation through this pilot project, the requirements for off-campus employment have not changed. Though students will be allowed to work more hours, they will not be permitted to reduce their course loads to free up time to work those extra hours.

According to the Government of Canada website, to work off-campus a student must have a study permit stating they are allowed to work on or off campus; have begun studies at the educational institution; and if a student does not have a work permit, both the potential employer and the student must ensure the student is permitted to work. Students who work without meeting these requirements face the risk of being asked to leave Canada.

Unlike permanent residents or citizens who have access to government loans, international students must meet the cost of tuition fees and living expenses on their own.

Many students rely on financial help from their families, and the ability to earn more and support themselves better is certainly welcome.

On average, depending on the educational institution and the program of study, annual tuition fees could be anything from \$ 20,000 to \$ 30,000 or even more. At least another \$15,000 is required for living expenses.

Statistics Canada reports that in the Second Quarter of 2022, most job openings were in Ontario. Other reports indicate that Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Quebec too hold out more job opportunities. Also, most vacancies in the first quarter of 2022 occurred in food services and related sectors, with a high demand for counter attendants and kitchen helpers. Retail salespersons and truck drivers too were in high demand. There is also a demand for registered nurses, orderlies, nurse aides, patient service associates, cooks, construction trade helpers and laborers, food and beverage servers and material handlers. **IM**

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Maryam Salehizadeh: Representing Canada Internationally Despite Visual Impairment



To represent Canada internationally! The challenges she encountered were not... offensive player on the Canadian Goal... In a conversation with this Paralympian... uncovers the story of this inspiring immigrant who represented Canada internationally.

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Internationally ent

By Harita Dave



This was Maryam
gently insurmountable
enough to stop this
Goalball Women's Team.
In, Immigrant Muse
migrant, who has

Maryam landed in Canada in November 2016 on a visitor visa with one dream in mind: "to represent Canada internationally" and she never looked back. "My dream was to join the Canadian team and compete in Tokyo Olympics, Paralympics and world competitions," says Maryam, who was 29 when she arrived in Canada.

"When I arrived in Vancouver and explored, I realized everything was here. Compared to my home country, Iran, things were more accessible here for someone with visual impairment. So, I decided to stay back and fulfil my dream", Maryam expresses. Prior to coming to Canada, Maryam was a physical education teacher, a goalball coach, and a member of the Iranian National Goalball team for ten years. Despite being accoladed twice as the best offensive player in Asian Competitions, Maryam "couldn't participate in world competitions as Iran didn't allow us to participate in competitions hosted by a few specific countries, thus we were missing on all big competitions", she says.

Achieving her Canadian dreams did not come without its challenges.

"I came all alone to Canada. My family and the society back in my country were against my decision. They were concerned about my safety in a new country. I heard all sorts of things, 'you're a refugee, you'll have to live in a shelter, people will take advantage of you, you are visually impaired, which will make things even worse and that I should move back to Iran.

"I was married at the time, but I separated from my husband after almost ten years because he was against my decision to move to Canada. I had to try to explain my needs and dreams to people. "Having less than 5 per cent vision, there were a lot of other challenges that I dealt with, including financial, housing, and language barriers. I couldn't freely walk around to find organizations or local services. And I was lonely because I was away from my friends and family."



It took almost two years and four months for Maryam to get her permanent residency, without which she couldn't represent Canada in an international competition. However, she says, "I utilized this time for training, although my financial crisis didn't allow me to hire a personal trainer. I missed a lot of training camps due to financial crunch, and my lack of fluent English language skills made it hard to communicate with new friends and teammates."

Maryam enrolled in English classes at Vancouver Community College to improve her language skills and tried to find a job. Sadly, Maryam couldn't find a job due to her "limited English language skills. Also, at that time, there were hardly any jobs for the visually impaired. I had to spend all my savings, and eventually applied for welfare and disability benefits." Despite these challenges, the athlete in Maryam refused to give up on her dreams.

Finally in 2019, things began to fall in the right places for Maryam. "I received my permanent residency in March and made it to the (Canadian Goalball Women) team of six athletes for the Parapan American Games in August. Our team won the bronze medal." Since her selection into the Canadian team in 2019, Maryam has represented Canada internationally in the Paralympics, the American Championship, and the Parapan American Games. In 2021, she joined the Canadian team to compete in the Tokyo Paralympics. "Although we didn't make it to the podium in the Tokyo Paralympics, it was a huge achievement for me," she adds.

Maryam feels honored to be part of the team representing Canada

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TIPS TO EFFICIENTLY NETWORK ON **LinkedIn**

By Esther Haastrup

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional online network. The platform's efficiency in helping professionals build an online presence and exposure accounts for its popularity. In addition to the ability to create a professional profile, LinkedIn provides a safe space for job seekers to upload their resumes and for employers to post job openings as well. With LinkedIn, you have the resources to project yourself in the light you want to be seen in the professional world.

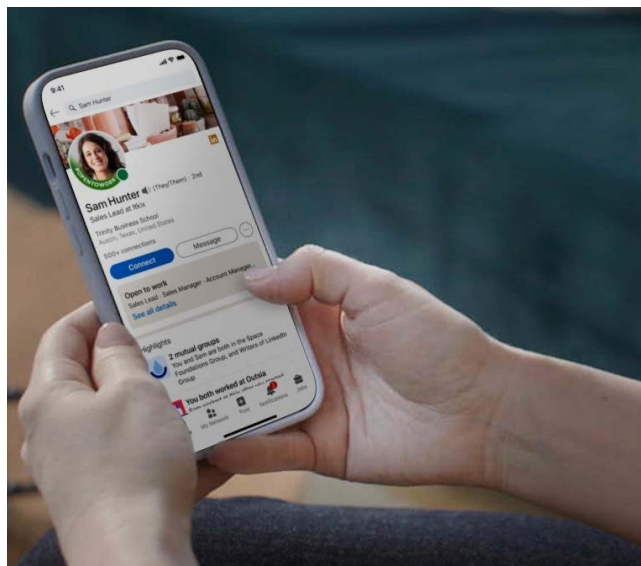
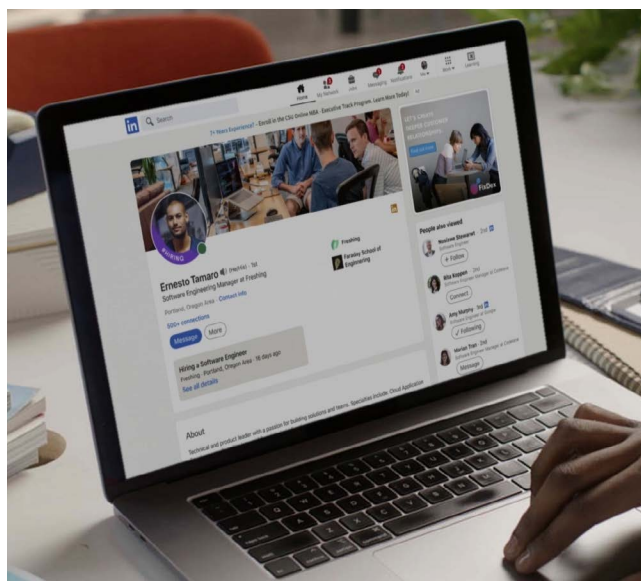
How can you efficiently utilize LinkedIn to achieve your career goals if you're new to the platform? Here are seven tips to help you optimize your LinkedIn profile and build an enviable professional persona.

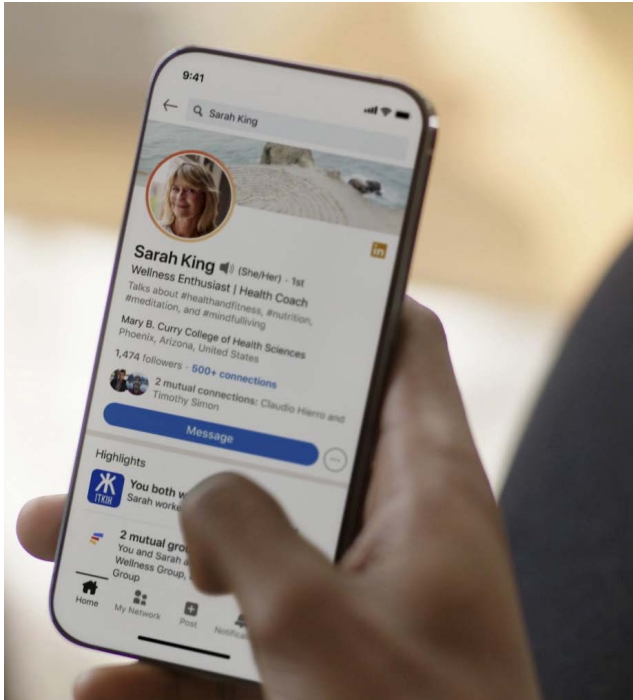
1. Write an irresistible headline

The headline section has a 120-character limit. Make ample use of this to write an eye-catching headline. Potential recruiters and connections would be looking to see more than your name. They would want to see something interesting that would make them view your complete profile. It took Jisha Arunkuman, an HR expert in Canada, about three days to develop a good headline for her LinkedIn profile. Your headline is your first contact with your potential recruiter or LinkedIn connections. It is just like a book cover. You glance through the back for information on the book or the author; that is just what your headline looks like from a recruiter's point of view, so take your time to market yourself in that section. Do a quick search of professionals in the same sector and industry as you to get hints on what you can possibly include in your headline.

2. Tell a compelling story in your summary

The summary section has a 2,000-character limit. Use this to tell potential recruiters and connections who you are, what you are proud of and what you have accomplished. Highlight your achievements and not your job description. Write what you want people to know about your career. If you have switched careers, indicate this and use words that connect your transition from one career to another. This makes it easy for your connections and potential recruiters to know what you have been up to career-wise. Also, include details of your personal and professional life. Write this summary in the first-person pronoun to promote engagements.





3. Invite colleagues to give you recommendations

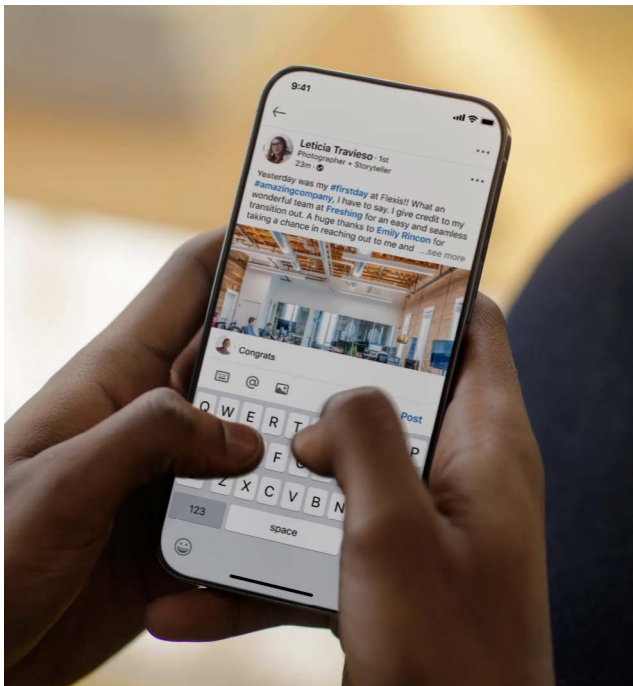
You can invite one or two people to write a convincing recommendation that would capture the skill you want to be recruited for. Although it may be uncomfortable to ask people directly to write a recommendation for your LinkedIn profile. There are ways you can go about it. For instance, you could ask your team members at work or people you have done projects with if they could contribute to your recommendation. You don't have to make it sound formal; just make a friendly request. This is why you need to build close personal relationships with your colleagues, as it may come in handy someday.

4. Highlight past job experiences

Your past job experience is one of the most critical aspects of your profile. Focus on the accomplishments that are relevant to the career growth you're pursuing. Summarize relevant projects you have managed or executed. Highlight specific core skills and achievements in your career.

5. Create a balance in your profile

A LinkedIn profile is dynamic and can be edited. As you grow in your career and make changes, don't forget to update your profile. Be sure to balance your technical skills, experience and soft skills to capture everything necessary.



7. Use industry keywords

Weave keywords relevant to the type of job you seek into your profile. Use them in your headline, summary, experience and skills. Look through numerous job descriptions for the role you're seeking and find meaningful common industry vocabulary to use in your profile. However, don't overdo it. You only need to use a few here and there. This would project you as a professional who knows his or her onions.

8. Engage with industry thought leaders

Find and follow thought leaders in your industry and location (either province or Canada-wide). Engage with the posts of these leaders by writing insightful comments that position you as an expert in the field.

There is no point in optimizing your profile if you're not active on LinkedIn. You could miss opportunities when they come calling. Make it a point to check your feeds and like and comment on posts at least twice weekly. In time, you will become comfortable creating your own posts and further building your connections. Remember that LinkedIn is your personal, professional networking site and career development tool. Use it efficiently!



SHOULD YOU CONTACT RECRUITERS ON **LinkedIn**

Here's What Recruiters Say

By Esther Haastrup

LinkedIn is the world's largest online professional network, with about fifty million listed companies and available in twenty-four languages.

It has become a favourite job board for many recruiters, who favour LinkedIn because of the opportunity to view the profiles of job applicants. When it is enabled, job applicants also have the chance to see the recruiter behind a vacancy and potentially send them a message on LinkedIn to pitch themselves for vacant roles. Although some job applicants claim that this LinkedIn feature has helped them land the job of their dreams, many applicants still wonder whether it is right to send recruiters a LinkedIn message. Immigrant Muse asked recruiters and hiring managers about their perception of job seekers reaching out to them on LinkedIn. Here are some of the responses we gathered.

Would you like job applicants to reach out to you on LinkedIn?

Christina Antoniou, Director of Corporate Affairs at Pfizer Canada, says, "yes".

Reshmi Raveendran, a Senior Technical Recruiter at Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), opines that "job seekers should reach out to recruiters on LinkedIn because it will improve their chances of landing a job in the organization". She also added that "the job seeker's LinkedIn profile should be as detailed as possible with a good summary and details about their work experience and educational certifications because most recruiters will look at the entire profile of the candidate before responding to a (message or

connection request".

Amel Cheema, a Senior Talent Acquisition Specialist at Vendasta, says she gets tons of LinkedIn messages every day, and it is impossible to reply to all applicants; hence, the selection process. She looks out for "value-added, as opposed to generic statements". She adds that she looks for information that "show(s) us you've done your research – tell us how you heard of Vendasta or share an interesting insight from a video or article you've viewed". Amel suggests: "Tailor your message to the employer and position...mention a mutual connection...and don't be

afraid to (tell us) you know a current employee or business connection. Let your personality show. We want to know our prospective future Vendastians, so don't be afraid to let a little of your personality shine in your message".

Fola Adebawo, Specialist, Talent Acquisition at BHP affirms that she would also like applicants to reach out on LinkedIn.

David S, Talent Acquisition Manager at Monstercat says, "I don't mind candidates reaching out to me with specific questions about a role. But it's often a waste of time when they try to send me their resume instead of applying directly through the job link." David clarifies that when he receives resumes unrelated to open requisitions; he uploads them to the internal CRM for future reference.

What specific information would you like them to include in their outreach message?

Christina Antoniou says when reaching out, "the individual should highlight how their background and experiences relate to the specific open role only. It's best practice to reach out for specific roles and not general opportunities".

Reshmi Raveendran says, "when sending a connection invitation to a recruiter, I suggest the job seeker include a crisp and clear summary of their skills and the reason they want to connect. For example, if they are looking for a job opportunity, they should include the type of job, their skills and contact information to take the conversation forward. If the job seeker has a specific job opportunity that they are interested in, it will be helpful to provide the job ID when contacting the recruiter. The recruiter (will be able) to reach out to the hiring team with the candidate's profile.

"LinkedIn invitation messages have a word limit, so the message should be to the point. The LinkedIn profile should be detailed, almost like a curriculum vitae, so

the recruiter can scan through the skills and connect with them. Many job seekers send a connection request with no content in their invitations. Generally, recruiters receive many connection invitations and may get missed if there aren't enough details in the message or the profile".

Fola agrees with Christina and Reshmi that candidates should include "a brief writeup on their background (education and experience), and what they're looking for. If they have reached out to me in response to a specific role, they need to tell me that they've applied to the position I posted. I may not oblige their requests if they ask for a meeting because of my busy schedule. I'll be able to oblige their requests if they ask for information about their career".

David adds, "the most powerful way to utilize LinkedIn messaging is by applying for a role and then sending a follow-up message via LinkedIn".

Are there any downsides or upsides to reaching out to recruiters on LinkedIn?

Christina says, "the upside of reaching out is being able to connect with someone within the organization. You may not get an immediate response, given the volume of messages received. The ideal approach is to apply directly to each open opportunity via the posting links. Only applications received formally will be considered".

Reshmi shares a similar sentiment: "most recruiters connect with talent who reach out to them on LinkedIn and match them with open roles. Sometimes, if there're too many messages, some may be missed. To avoid being overlooked, it is beneficial to only apply to roles which seem like a good fit before reaching out to the recruiter. Job seekers should review the company website for open positions, connect with the recruiter, and provide the specific job ID".

On the downside, Fola says, "some people don't know how to go straight to the point. They say hello or hi and wouldn't type anything else. Some do not know how to articulate their thoughts, while some are outright condescending". On the upside, she adds, "they may reach out to someone who needs their services, and increases the chances of referral".

Amel says, "there are both sides to this. On the upside, it will likely never hurt their chances to reach out on LinkedIn as long as they are respectful and professional. If the message truly helps them stand out, mission accomplished! On the flip side, some recruiters might be getting hundreds of messages and unable to reply. The candidate will have used their time and energy to reach out, and it can be disheartening not to get a reply. Just know we appreciate the time spent connecting with us and taking a genuine interest in our opportunities".

Are there situations where job seekers should avoid reaching out to recruiters on LinkedIn?

The recruiters all said NO. You can reach out to recruiters on LinkedIn as long as you do it right by following the tips from these recruiters. What if you consistently follow these tips and still get no response? Don't be discouraged! The recruiter's inbox might be overflowing with similar messages; perhaps, it's time to add some value with some of these suggestions.



Tips to Improve Your Mental Health

By Carole Sandy, MEd Counselling, MSc. (A) Couple and Family, R.S.W

Do you find it confusing when people speak about mental health? If you do, I invite you to go on this journey with me to uncover some confusing and sometimes unhelpful ideas about mental health. Although mental health has become a hot topic of discussion, we often fail to consider the cultural difference that occasionally gets in the way and make it hard to explain. Born of immigrant parents myself, mental health was avoided and never discussed in my family.

Mental health applies to how we think, feel and behave, which impacts our relationships, daily activities and physical wellbeing.



We all desire a good life where we grow, contribute to our family, friends and community, utilize our gifts and face adversities well. However, how we cope with our mental health depends upon the frequency, quantity and intensity of the stress, anxiety or depression we might face.

Sometimes, life events can quickly spiral out of our control, making us prone to developing a mental health disorder regardless of age, gender, income or ethnicity. Painful experiences and memories can overpower the body and mind, and avoiding or silencing our pain can lead to uncomfortable emotions. For immigrants, struggling with mental health is normal when we consider all the stress accompanying immigrating from another country. Immigrants must endure the fear of the unknown, concern around job loss, and new routines and changes. These have also been magnified by the feeling of fear, sadness and anxiety caused by the pandemic.

This can quickly lead to a mental health disorder. This disorder can be caused by negative childhood experiences,

environmental factors that impact our genes, medical conditions, along with social and financial struggles, which have a way of affecting how our bodies and mind respond to stress.

Mental health disorders are not connected to being strong or weak. In fact, when we become triggered and feel emotionally overwhelmed, expressing our feelings becomes difficult, especially with language and cultural barriers. Despite these unique challenges, you can take care of your mental health with the tips below.

Tips To Improve Your Mental Health

Ask for help; you don't have to do it all alone. Your mental health is not connected to you figuring life out on your own

Focus on the things you can change, and do not spend a lot of time thinking about what is outside of your control

Learn to forgive yourself. We are all a work in progress and if you need to forgive someone else, focus on how forgiveness will help you in the long run. The first word in forgiveness is FOR. Remember, it's "for" you and not them.

Take a break by taking a step away and breathing. It can help you see the situation differently.

Recall what you are most grateful for daily. When was the last time you noticed the little things around you that you are most grateful for?

Maintain healthy social connections with friends and family through emails or planned chats. Positive supports are vital for your wellbeing.

Feed your mind, and learn something new often. Learning something new can nourish your sense of purpose.

Get enough sleep. Make an effort to eat healthy foods and move your body regularly. Schedule a walk, develop a workout routine or a spiritual practice.

Want to get started on the journey to better mental health? Pick one of these tips and begin working on it today, one little effort at a time. This is a space of growth and opportunity, and I look forward to our journey together.





CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND MULTICULTURALISM THROUGH FESTIVALS

By Katrina Macadaeg

Canada is truly a land of immigrants. The cultural fabric from over 200 countries is woven beautifully into a colorful tapestry of the Canadian culture.

During the summer months, Canada comes alive with seemingly endless festivities to celebrate diversity and multiculturalism. Peruse this list of the biggest annual festivals in the country and learn about a new culture.



Alberta

Edmonton Heritage Festival

The Heritage Festival is considered one of the largest multicultural events in the world. Held annually in William Hawrelak Park, Edmonton, Alberta, it boasts of around 50 outdoor pavilions, representing 60 countries and cultures. Thousands of visitors flock to this festival to sample delicious food, enjoy entertainment, and celebrate Canada's multiculturalism. Admission is free to view more than 900 cultural dance shows, arts, crafts and historical displays.

Cariwest

Festival-goers who want to experience the vibrant Caribbean heritage, music, and cultures must attend Edmonton's Cariwest Festival. This festival offers three days of fun for people of all ages every August. It features a Friday Night Costume Extravaganza, Edmonton's largest daytime summer parade on Saturday and a Caribbean Village through the weekend. The village showcases live cultural entertainment, a Kids Korner, food alley offering Caribbean cuisine and the Caribbean Marketplace.

Expo Latino

Calgary's Expo Latino is considered Western Canada's largest Latin festival. This family-friendly outdoor event creates unique experiences through the celebration of music, dance, and people. It features world-class performances, exotic foods, unique crafts, and so much more. This three-day festival takes place at night and features six hours of Latin American performers from Canada and other countries.

British Columbia

Surrey Fusion Festival

Established in 2008, the Surrey Fusion Festival has become the largest free multicultural festival in British Columbia and a major event in Canada. This festival features over 50 different cultures from African, Asian, Caribbean, Latin American, European, and North American countries. It also includes an Indigenous Village, a Kids World & Sports Zone and numerous exotic ethnic food vendors. The pavilions offer international foods, artifacts and textile displays, and multiple stages showcasing musical and dance performances.



Caribbean Days Festival

Trinidad & Tobago Cultural Society of BC's Caribbean Days Festival has become one of the largest cultural events in British Columbia. This event attracts tens of thousands of fun-lovers who enjoy a weekend of parades, carnival, cuisine, music, and dance under the summer sun. This lively festival is free for attendees of all ages to enjoy.

Manitoba

Folklorama

In 1970, Folklorama was inaugurated as a one-time multicultural event to celebrate Manitoba's Centennial. Due to its tremendous success, it has become an annual event and is now recognized as the world's biggest and longest-running multicultural festival. Folklorama runs for two weeks every year in Winnipeg, Manitoba and attendees get to sample ethnic dishes and learn about cultural traditions and history.

Icelandic Festival of Manitoba

Manitoba's Icelandic Festival, the largest and longest running Icelandic Festival in North America, offers the opportunity to be an honorary Icelander for a weekend.

Every August long weekend, visitors from across the world flock to Gimli, Manitoba to celebrate Icelandic culture and heritage. Attendees enjoy Viking re-enactors in battle, learn about the old Norse culture, enjoy Icelandic food, view traditional Icelandic costumes, shop crafts and souvenirs, and enjoy live music and entertainment from Canadian and Icelandic musicians. Attendees can participate in fun contests such as the family scavenger hunt, beach volleyball tournament, and sandcastle contest. They also enjoy an Icelandic fashion show and fireworks.

New Brunswick

New Brunswick Highland Games Festival

Established in 1981, the New Brunswick Highland Games is held in Fredericton, New Brunswick to celebrate the Scottish and Celtic culture and heritage. With inclusiveness as its main goal, it spreads knowledge of the culture with visitors of Scottish descent and anyone who wishes to learn about the Scottish heritage.

The festival features piping and drumming contests, athletic competitions, and dance events. It likewise includes entertainment, mini golf, and face painting activities for kids.

Mosaiq Festival

Mosaiq Festival started as a lawn party in front of Moncton's city hall in 2004. Now, it draws more than 10,000 participants and is the largest multicultural festival in New Brunswick. Every July, this vibrant festival highlights international foods, multicultural vendors, and a beer garden. It also features an exciting line-up of multicultural entertainers from around the world.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival

Recognized as one of the biggest summer festivals in the province, the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival draws thousands of attendees to Bannerman Park in St. John. During this two-day event, Newfoundland and Labrador's unique culture is promoted through an interactive workshop where participants can learn a dance, a tune, or a story. It also highlights folk music that are mostly of Scottish or Irish origin.

Nova Scotia

Nova Multifest

Nova Multifest is Nova Scotia's largest multicultural festival. It exhibits the province's multicultural fabric through dance performances, live music, culinary delights, and unique arts. It aims to bring communities together by supporting diversity, inclusion, tolerance and positivity. This three-day event is held every July in Alderney Landing in Dartmouth, NS. Admission is free but tickets are required to enjoy the children's bouncy castle.

Afrifest

The African Festival of Arts and Culture or Afrifest celebrates the unique arts and cultural heritage of people of African descent living in Nova Scotia. It aims to promote inclusion and diversity through the works of African artists and performers. Visitors enjoy arts and crafts, stand-up comedy, literature, food and music. This cultural event is held on the Halifax Waterfront and is free for everyone to enjoy.

Ontario

Toronto Caribbean Festival (Caribana)

Caribana was originally established as a three-day event in 1967. It is now known as the Toronto Caribbean Festival and has grown into a three-week carnival. With more than a million total visitors, it is considered North America's grandest street festival.

This festival is a celebration of Caribbean music, dance, traditions, costumes, cuisine, and festivity. It follows the Trinidad & Tobago's Carnival format and is influenced by street dancing on every Caribbean Island. The festival's ambiance is elevated by the mix of musical styles from the Caribbean including calypso, reggae, and soca. Fun-seeker mustn't miss this festival!

TD Mosaic Fest – South Asian Festival

With around 70,000 visitors from across Ontario, the TD Mosaic Fest is billed as the largest, longest running, award-winning festival showcasing South Asian art, culture and cuisine. Held annually at the Celebration Square in Mississauga, it features an impressive lineup of popular South Asian, Canadian and international musicians, singers, and dancers. Presentations include Pakistani folk dances and Bollywood shows. It also features Children's arts and crafts workshop, food court showcasing delicious South Asian cuisine, face painting, and henna competition.

Taste of Lawrence

Taste of Lawrence is dubbed Scarborough's largest street festival. It showcases 130 street vendors, rides and amusements, and two live entertainment stages. Locals and tourists enjoy the non-stop entertainment, sample delectable flavors offered by multi-cultural food vendors, and learn about the rich heritage of others. This three-day fun-filled festival is held along Lawrence Avenue and is free to explore.

Prince Edward Island

DiverseCity Multicultural Festival

In 2007, the DiverseCity Festival was organized to celebrate Canadian Multiculturalism Day. It was initiated to bring newcomers and Islanders together, present their cultures, and share their talents. This annual street festival has become a major summer event in Prince Edward Island. It features cuisines, music, dance, arts, and crafts of around eighty different cultures from recent immigrants, First Nations, and established descendants of earlier Acadian, English, Irish, and Scottish immigrants. More than 20, 000 visitors participate in this meaningful event in Prince Edward Island each year.

Quebec

Orientalys Festival

With the Clock Tower Quay at the Old Port of Montreal as its backdrop, the Orientalys Festival presents the perfect fusion of Eastern and Western cultures. This fun event allows festival-goers to experience the culture, cuisine and music of Eastern countries, from North Africa to China. It features exciting activities, performances, workshops, animations, and exhibitions for people of all ages. Every August, children and adults get to experience free diverse, unique, and exciting activities in Montreal.

ItalfestMTL

The Italian community has become one of the largest ethno-cultural groups in the province of Quebec. ItalfestMTL was launched in 1994 as a small event in the Montreal-North borough to promote Italian culture through concerts, an opera, a film festival, a fashion show, an art competition, and culinary discovery. The festival has expanded to present a myriad of activities in Montreal neighborhoods, as well as in Laval, every August. As one of the largest multicultural events in Montreal, it welcomes more than 400, 000 visitors and features 250 local and international talents.

Saskatchewan

Saskatoon Folkfest – Culture Connect

Saskatoon Folkfest is an annual festival that aims to educate people about different cultures, preserve culture, and provide scholarships to deserving students. Some of the best long-time pavilions include Bangladesh, Central America & Mexico, Germany, Hungary, India, Nepal, Philippines, Scotland, and South Sudan.

Yukon

Adäka Cultural Festival

Launched in 2011, the Adäka Cultural Festival delivers a world-class festival to display, honor, and foster Yukon's diverse and unique First Nations arts and culture. An art exhibit, cultural presentations, and public workshop are some of the highlights of this interesting event that is held in Whitehorse, Yukon.

Diversity and multiculturalism create a colorful cultural fabric for Canada. Although this is not an exhaustive list of all the festivals in Canada, it's a great place to start if you would like to experience the beauty of Canadian diversity. Add a few of these festivals to your bucket list in the coming year to experience their beauty.



Goal Setting Template

Setting a long term goal is a strategic way to ensure that you achieve your purpose, whether in your personal, professional, business or social life. However, without the right plan to achieve this goal, it can quickly fall through the crack. Setting several short-term goals that align with the big picture can help you stay on course. For instance, if your long-term goal is to become a CEO in the next 10

years, setting short term goals that involve meeting the right people, finding a sponsor, taking a leadership course and perhaps shadowing a CEO would help you put your CEO goal in perspective. This template will help you set short term goals with actionable steps to achieve your goals.

SMART GOAL: My goal for the next three months is...	
GOAL FOR EACH MONTH	TASKS TO ACHIEVE MONTHLY GOALS
MONTH 1 GOAL:	Task 1:
	Task 2:
	Task 3:
MONTH 2 GOAL:	Task 1:
	Task 2:
	Task 3:
MONTH 3 GOAL:	Task 1:
	Task 2:
	Task 3:
REVIEW (Did I achieve my goal? What next?)	

RENTING A HOME AS A NEWCOMER

By Harita Dave

Swapna Katram moved to Canada in 2019. After staying at a friend's house in the initial months, Swapna booked a large room with a private bathroom with a jacuzzi, as shown in the advert on Airbnb. "I had messaged the host and asked to see the room in person. Strangely, the host claimed that no tenant had ever made such a request and denied it. On the day of my check-in, I was shocked. It was nothing like the room in the advertising. It was just one-fourth of the room compared to the ad picture", lamented Swapna. Swapna confronted the owner, who was rude to her. She felt cheated for renting the room for a hefty \$1,800 per month. "When I rechecked the ad, the pictures in the ad had changed", she added.



Swapna's problem didn't end there. She discovered that there were cameras in the living room and kitchen. "I double-checked my room and bathroom to ensure that there were no cameras", she added.

Swapna advises newcomers to "know their landlords, see the property and be aware of the rules and regulations of their provincial tenant board." She also encourages newcomers to contact the rental authority in their province or territory if they have a problem with their landlord.

Take the time to find the right home before landing or post-landing. Before worrying about finding a job in Canada, having a roof over your head is vital once you land. While you may be able to change jobs easily, that's not the case with a house, especially with the current housing crisis.

How To Find A Rental Home In Canada

▶ Use Your Network

Find and join social media rental groups in your city. You will find several location-specific groups on social media. Joining these groups can make your life easier by connecting you to homeowners and property managers in your city.

Ask your friends to help you find a home by recommending you to a landlord. This will also help with your rental references if the landlord already knows and trusts the person recommending you.

▶ Visit Rental Websites

The demand for rental properties has grown in the last few years with the influx of immigrants. Several websites make it easy to find a rental home in various locations.

There is Kijiji, Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, Rentals.ca, Condos.ca, and others. These websites not only help you to rent but also to list your home for rental or sublease. So, it's a win-win situation.

These websites allow you to adjust your search according to your budget, location and amenities. It will filter out and offer the best options to you. If you are looking for short-term rentals, go for Airbnb or a hotel to allow you time to find the right home.

▶ Hire A Real Estate Agent

If your budget allows and you want to focus on other areas of settlement rather than a house-hunting, you may want to hire a real estate agent to help you find rental accommodation. The realtor would know about listings in the area, look for places that best suit your needs and deal directly with the landlord. However, the real estate agents will expect a commission from the landlord, which will add up to your rent.

Factors To Consider Before Deciding On Your Rental Home

▶ Budget

The quality of the rental home you get primarily depends on your budget. Decide how much you can afford to spend on housing and narrow your search. Remember that you may need to adjust your budget or requirements if you do not find a suitable house that fits the bill.

▶ Neighbourhood

Before finalizing your rental agreements, ensure the home is close to the essential amenities. It is of utmost importance to find the crime rate in that neighbourhood. Google-search the city's crime index or ask around. You can also visit the community at a different time of the day.

▶ Inspection

Do not decide based on photos shared with you or video calls, as these may be deceptive and not representative of the property. You should inspect the house in person or ask someone you trust to help you inspect the place

▶ Documentation

You will need to keep certain documents ready before renting. The landlord or property manager may ask for an employment letter with your salary details or pay stubs, credit report, bank statements and references from your employer or previous landlords. If you're a newcomer without these documents, explain to your landlord and offer your bank statement and references as proof that you can afford the rent.

▶ Lease Agreement

Read the fine print of your lease before signing it to understand the terms fully. How long is the lease? What happens if you need to vacate the house before the end of your lease? Who repairs damages? What happens if you're unable to pay rent for a while? What's the procedure for laying complaints about the house, other tenants or the landlord? What are your rights? What are your responsibilities? These are some questions you must ask your landlord and cover in the lease. Ask your friends to help you check the lease agreement and ensure it follows the provincial tenancy law. Clarify all the rules and instructions before signing the lease.

▶ Rental insurance

Resources

The federal government has a dedicated information page on renting a home in Canada that contains everything you need to know as an immigrant.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/new-immigrants/new-life-canada/housing/renting.html>

before making a decision. Check for bed bugs, as this can be a big issue in Canada!

▶ House Rules

House rules change with each landlord. Confirm all the house rules and get them written in the lease agreement to avoid future inconveniences and inconsistencies. Confirm with the landlord if the place is guest-friendly and pet-friendly, and whether parties or smoking are allowed. Also, confirm if your rent includes utilities and get a sense of the average cost of utilities to avoid surprises.

Consider getting rental insurance even if your landlord does not make it mandatory. This covers losses to personal property due to fire, natural calamity, theft, vandalism, and even flooring damage caused by plumbing issues. It also covers your additional living expenses; in case you are forced to leave your rental unit while it is under repair. Rental insurance is quite affordable and ranges between \$10 to \$25 per month, depending on your location and the coverage you require. **IM**

CANADA MODERNIZES IMMIGRATION WITH DIGITIZED APPLICATION PROCESS

By Kshama Ranawana



Between September and October 2022, Canada began to fully digitalize applications for most permanent immigration programs. Before then, online applications were accepted only for programs such as Spousal sponsorship. In March 2021, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) began accepting online applications for spousal and common-law sponsorship through the Permanent Residence portal.

For programs with a digitized application process, IRCC will only accept online applications. Applicants unable to use the online application feature must contact IRCC for an alternative format; otherwise, IRCC may reject unauthorized non-digital applications.

Digitization Launch Date

- ❑ September 23, 2022: family sponsorship including a dependent child, spouse or partner, eligible relative, an orphaned sibling, nephew, niece or grandchild. Also, Canadians who wish to adopt a child using the immigration process can apply online, as well as Quebec-selected skilled workers and the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot programs.

- ❑ October 7, 2022: Self-employed individuals applying to Quebec and Quebec –selected investors and entrepreneurs.
- ❑ October 14, 2022: Start-up Visa, Agri-food pilot and Temporary Resident Permit holders applying for Permanent Residency
- ❑ October 21, 2022: Applications on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, Self-employed applicants under the Federal program and the Home Child Care Provider Pilot.
- ❑ October 28, 2022: Applicants under the Atlantic Immigration Program.

In an email conversation with Immigrant Muse, Peter Liang, IRCC's Communications Advisor, stated that the department had initiated several measures to accelerate spousal sponsorship applications. These include: "file digitization, electronic applications, remote processing, conducting remote interviews, the use of advanced analytics, and the introduction of an online application portal and tools to facilitate the processing of these files." He adds that modernizing services has made it possible to return to the "pre-pandemic service standard of 12



months for new spousal sponsorship applications.”

According to IRCC, there are 2.1 million inventories currently. While 1.02 million applications are within the service standard timeframe, 1.09 million have exceeded the service standard and are in backlog. Current applications under the Permanent Residence category are 609,400, and 1,184,000 under the Temporary Residence program. IRCC’s goal is to process 80 per cent of applications within the service standard timeframe.

Liang adds that the “Government of Canada proposed to provide \$85 million in 2022–23 so it can process more permanent and temporary residence applications and reduce processing times in key areas affected by the pandemic. In addition to this, and to further address the ongoing application backlogs, and the need for skilled newcomers to fill critical labour gaps faster, the government has committed an additional \$50 million in the 2022 Fall Economic statement.”



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LIVING TO YOUR FULL POTENTIAL THROUGH GOAL SETTING



People with goals succeed because they know where they are going. It's as simple as that.

– Earl Nightingal

Does this sound familiar?

You feel like you're not living to your full potential.

You believe that life could be better, but you're not sure how.

You haven't found anything important enough to apply all of your efforts.

You struggle to put enough effort into what you are passionate about.

You haven't made significant progress in any one direction.

The solution to these common problems is goal setting. Goal setting allows you to take control of your life by focusing on clear targets and developing activities to guide your actions. Goal setting helps you improve your outlook by taking your life from where it is now to where you believe it should be. And while the future may be full of possibilities, knowing where to start on the path from your current life to the one you envision for yourself can be challenging; this is where goal setting is the most useful. Setting a goal gives you something specific to work towards, which can also help you stay motivated and on track.

Think of a goal as a debt you owe yourself. Envision the

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Tips For Setting Achievable Goals

Start with the end in mind

Begin by making each goal a positive statement. What will your life look like after you have achieved your goal? For example, "I will fit into that little black dress." This statement is better than saying, "My goal is to lose 30 pounds," because it allows you to envision your life after you achieve your goal.

Set High But Achievable Goals

While you don't want to put too much pressure on yourself to achieve something nearly impossible, you want your dreams to be significant enough to give you the determination to reach them and a sense of accomplishment.

Re-Evaluate Often

Self-evaluation is a crucial part of any journey toward

success. Frequently evaluating your goals, plans, and progress will keep you focused, help you learn from the process, and allow you to make minor adjustments as needed.

Stay On Track

When it comes to goal setting, staying on track can be difficult. This is why finding an accountability partner to help you review your goals and stay motivated is crucial.

Despite your best efforts, you may not achieve your goal. It is important to keep in mind some of the common reasons why a goal may fail. Sincerely ask yourself these questions to determine the root cause of the failure:

Is my goal realistic? Setting a goal that relies too heavily on finances, physical capabilities, or time you do not have will make your goal unattainable, especially in the short term. For example, there is a

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slim chance that someone who does not regularly exercise could become a ballerina within the next six months.

Is my goal well-defined? Goals that do not meet the SMART criteria (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) are missing essential elements of successful goals. Ensure that you define specific, relevant goals that you know you can achieve within a certain time frame.

Am I forcing myself to achieve someone else's goal for me? If someone else has pushed you to set this goal, consider whether or not it is something that you want or need, and can therefore achieve.

Am I afraid of the impact that this goal will have on my life? It's normal to feel apprehensive when facing a big goal because it often requires significant changes in your life. Don't let your fear hold you back! If you genuinely want something, push through and go for it.

Am I working on too many goals at a time? As with the first point, be realistic about what you can achieve. You can't change your entire life overnight, so you must settle on one 'big' goal with many 'small', supportive plans leading up to it.

Remember, success is a journey, not a destination. Start setting goals and make 2023 a year of change!



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Stepping Into Your Power Through Mentoring

"It's been amazing so far," says lawyer Lucy Mewanu-Mensah, who became a mentor last spring. A friend reached out to her about Futurpreneur's mentorship program, after looking into it, she was sold right away. "First of all, the approach, the objectives are amazing," she says of the mentorship initiative.

The program paired Mewanu-Mensah with two mentees working in two completely different sectors: law and construction. That disparity didn't phase Mewanu-Mensah, who is a lawyer herself: "I don't believe that you have to find a mentor who is specific to the industry that you are in. A mentor's role is to guide you based on the skills that you have and you're looking to improve because most skills are very transferable across different industries."

A mentor's goal is to discover a mentee's strengths, values, and beliefs, and ultimately leading them to grow on both interpersonal and professional levels. "Your mentor understands you as a person," she points out.

In that sense, a mentorship relationship is a two-way street: "It's not an imposition, or from one side. Based on the two mentees that I have, and my relationship with them, so far, it's been a learning process for both of us."

While she is learning a lot, making an impact is what keeps her going. It ties into the idea of giving back. "The impact I have on other people, I've gotten them from

somewhere, from experiences with clients, or interactions with colleagues. I'm passing it on to someone," she explains. Moreover, mentoring allows more people to access resources and build something — a benefit for everybody. "Even for myself in the future, I never know what I may venture into," Mewanu-Mensah declares.

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However, it is the pleasure of participating in the blossoming of an individual that is the real reward: "Imagine taking time to see another person grow, and knowing that you contributed to that." More than self-fulfillment, she views mentorship as a contribution to society.

Mewanu-Mensah herself still has a mentor. "And I will say that I could not have been where I am right now. The experiences that I've had, the successes, it's all because of my mentor," she says of her coach, who has been a guidance from law school to this day. "Such guidance, you cannot buy it anywhere," she says

An associate lawyer at Osuji & Smith, Lucy Mewanu-Mensah welcomes the shift toward entrepreneurship that she observes: "Everybody wants to have a legacy, to find themselves and put their identity in what they do. That is amazing...That's why we need more mentors. The more people stand on their own, the more they need continuing support and guidance."



What Mentoring Really Teaches You



"I was 100 per cent against mentoring before. I didn't believe in it at all," admits Jean Agenor, founder and CEO of Waxdale Ecosystem. The reason was simple: he was uncertain whether people's experiences were relatable. "Your reality is not the same as others, but there will be realities that are the same, that's the importance of mentoring," he now acknowledges.

Agenor, who is an accountant by trade, acts as a mentor at a number of organizations, including Futurpreneur, the United Nations, and The Forum. He has changed his mind with the intention of bringing to others what he didn't have when he first started out. "When I got started in entrepreneurship, there

was no one [...] who took the time to figure out what we wanted to do. It was pretty hard to navigate, we had to figure out everything ourselves," he recalls.

While his business specializes in supporting startups as they launch and grow, being a

mentor has allowed him to help his peers in a different way. "[Entrepreneurship] is a journey, and through that journey, there are pitfalls," he says. Some of these obstacles are part of the game. Others, Agenor notes, are avoidable: "A mentor is going to help you not face those kinds of pitfalls, [allowing] you to go out and face the hurdles necessary to progress, not the ones that don't."

Representation is central in Agenor's approach. In his early days, he met but few people who shared his background or ambitions. Being able to relate to a mentor can be a great inspiration to broaden one's perspective. Today, Agenor urges everyone to become an agent of change by figuratively stepping into the self they want to be, and to keep in mind those who will come after: "The next person will do it because they see you, and there will be a chain reaction. Representation allows you to see your options."

Mentors also benefit from their experience. Becoming a mentor is a win-win situation, Agenor believes. "The best way to learn is to teach," he tells us. When you are volunteering your time, it's not about telling your mentees what to do or to tell the story of your success. It's about lending an ear, offering resources, and, most importantly,

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collaborating. "I've worked with a variety of entrepreneurs. It was important for me to understand how they think, [and] what their challenges are," he says. Thus, in having someone to think with them through the questions the mentees raise, many entrepreneurs find solutions that work for them..

Beyond entrepreneurial success, it is also crucial to achieve self-actualization. Mentoring helps to do so, namely by

bringing people closer together. Furthermore, according to Agenor, the emotional intelligence that entrepreneurs need to develop is particularly underestimated in business: "We often talk about IQ, but EQ is important too. Entrepreneurship is not just about money." And it's an invaluable skill that can be costly if you lack it. Emotional intelligence makes you a better manager for both your employees and your business—the key to prosperity and longevity. **IM**

Canada Safeguards Temporary Foreign Workers With New Amendments

By Kshama Ranawana

The Canadian government launched the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program and the International Mobility Program (IMP) to meet labour shortages. Introduced in 1973, the TFW program requires businesses planning to hire temporary foreign workers to apply for a Labor Market Impact Assessment (LMIA). However, the IMP does not require an LMIA to hire a temporary foreign worker, as it falls under international trade agreements with other countries. While workers through IMP are economically, socially and culturally beneficial to Canada, this program also provides opportunities for Canadians and permanent residents to work in those countries.

Although TFWs have the same rights and protections as workers who are Canadian citizens and permanent residents, there have been allegations of forced labour, unsafe working conditions, and lesser wages experienced by TFWs. In September this year, the Canadian government made a series of amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (Temporary Foreign Workers) to safeguard the rights of foreign temporary workers employed in Canada.

According to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), the amendments address three areas: “protect temporary foreign workers, ensure the integrity of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and the International Mobility Program (IMP), and address some technical issues.”

The new amendments put the onus on employers to provide TFWs with “up-to-date information about their rights in Canada” and ensure they receive the information “on or before the first day of work.” ESDC adds that employers must provide the information in the language of choice of the employee, either English



or French and that such details must be “available to the temporary foreign worker throughout their period of employment.”

In addition to these obligations, employers of temporary foreign workers must provide them with a signed copy of the employment agreement on or before their first day of work; make reasonable efforts to provide a workplace free of abuse, including reprisals; get and pay for private health insurance that covers emergency medical care until they are eligible for provincial or territorial health insurance coverage (some exceptions apply); and, make reasonable efforts to give access to health care services if employees become injured or ill at the workplace.

Under the International Mobility Program, workers have the same rights except for the requirement for employers to obtain and pay for private health insurance until the employee is eligible for territorial or provincial health care. Nonetheless, employers must help workers access health care services if they become sick or hurt at work.

The regulations state that employers must not force employees in both categories to work when they are sick, injured or in unsafe conditions. Also, employers cannot assign duties not listed in the employment agreements nor punish them for cooperating with worksite inspections carried out by the government. It has also become illegal



The new amendments require employers applying for a Labor Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) to commit to an employment agreement with potential foreign workers to ensure they know how much they will earn and the nature of their work.

comply with the regulatory conditions without the consent of the employer or temporary worker, but in keeping with the Privacy Act.

Furthermore, ESDC is authorized to suspend an employer's LMIA where there are concerns that the employer may have failed to adhere to the regulations. ESDC may lift the suspension only when it is satisfied that the employer has complied with the requirements.

The new amendments also allow ESDC to consider two factors on a stand-alone basis when processing an LMIA request. Before the amendments, ESDC considered seven factors, and if an employer did not meet one or two of those conditions, it did not necessarily lead to a refusal of the LMIA. Under the current amendment, the other factors will remain part of the overall assessment process. However, ESDC will consider on a pass-or-fail basis whether the proposed foreign workers' wages are consistent with pay rates for that occupation and "whether the employment of the foreign worker is likely to adversely affect the settlement of any labour dispute or the employment of any person involved in the dispute." Whether or not the employer meets the other factors, the employer must pass these two conditions to qualify for the LMIA.

The new regulations allow ESDC to gather personal information of employers and temporary foreign workers through the TFW confidential tip line, the online reporting tool, or media reports and share them with inspection officers of IRCC to determine that employers meet the IMP requirements.

for employers to take their passports or work permit, change their immigration status or have them pay recruitment fees.

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ESDC requires employers to confirm before applying for LMIAs that they have not charged fees from potential candidates and will not do so in the future. Suppose employers or their recruiters have charged these fees; they must show that "they made all reasonable efforts to comply with the conditions, and they subsequently provided full compensation to the temporary foreign worker for the fees that were incorrectly charged or recovered." The only payments required of temporary workers are for work permits, temporary visas and temporary resident permits.

Where necessary, the amendments permit ESDC and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to request documentation from third parties, such as banks or payroll companies, to ascertain whether employers

Canada is currently facing a severe labour shortage, and according to government statistics, employers are struggling to fill nearly a million vacancies. IRCC reports that in 2021, under the TFWP and the IMP, a total of 599,300 work permits (new and extensions) were issued. In January 2022, the number of extensions and new permits issued under the two categories totalled 55,671.

Typically, the most employment opportunities are in the farming industry, though the restaurant sector is increasingly turning to temporary foreign workers to fill job openings. In this field, the highest demand is for cooks.

The labour shortage has increased the demand for workers in the construction and fish processing industries, food and beverages, and trucking and harvesting labourers.



WHAT IMMIGRANTS THOUGHT THEY KNEW ABOUT CANADA

By Tom Miller

I was six years old when I first set foot on Canadian shores, having flown from Liverpool to Vancouver one sunny day in July. I knew very little about anything, let alone the enormous country I was about to call home for the next 40-plus years. Also, I came from a very urban environment, with little knowledge or experience of the outdoors. No one had ever told me about barbecues or cooking outdoors in public places. So while sitting and watching the Pacific Ocean from Stanley Park not long after arriving, I had a bit of a meltdown as I saw flames licking up from a tiny grill in the park. My parents will never forget me screaming, “throw it in the ocean; it’s on fire!” Fast forward a few decades, and I’m an inveterate barbequer now. Still, that little child’s misunderstanding has followed me my whole life. This personal anecdote should make you feel better about any new immigrant misunderstandings you might encounter.

Immigrating to a new country is a bit like learning on a new job. Your education has hopefully prepared you for life in the country of your origin and has probably taught you little bits and pieces about other countries. But when you’re preparing to move to one of those countries, you must have more knowledge before leaving home.

We reached out to immigrants and asked them the following questions. Their answers are intriguing, amusing, and enlightening.

What did you know, or think you knew, about Canada before you immigrated? Did those things turn out to be accurate?



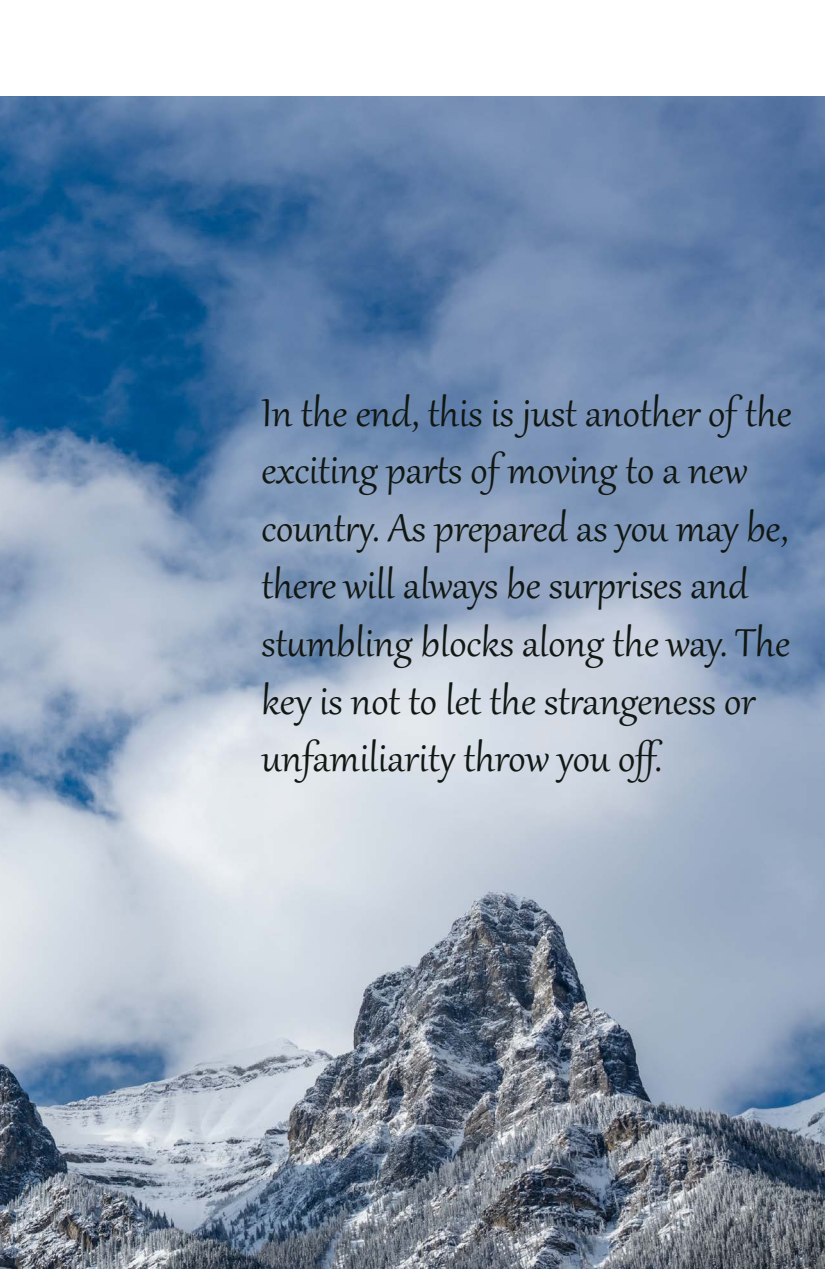
Tom, 42 years in Canada, originally from England: *“I guess I thought it would be more mountainous.”*

Isabel, 11 years in Canada, originally from Brazil: *“I didn’t think there were any Indigenous groups besides the Inuit, and I only knew them by the name ‘Eskimo.’”*

Sheila, 42 years in Canada, originally from England: *“I thought it was more mountainous.”*

Richard, 25 years in Canada, originally from South Africa: *“[I thought] that everyone was bilingual (French and English)”*

Even from these short answers, we get a pretty good idea of some of the stories about Canada. Tom and Sheila were exposed to images of the Rocky Mountains, certainly one of Canada’s most prominent features but only a tiny fraction of the country. As with many stories about Canada, a lot of our identity gets rolled up with our Southern neighbours. But Canada has immense prairies as well. Isabel’s response is another example of this – Canada is home to many Indigenous nations. Still, our cold climate and Inuit First Nation get a lot of attention. And Richard’s response acknowledges the well-known aspect of Canada as a country with two official languages is somewhat misunderstood.



In the end, this is just another of the exciting parts of moving to a new country. As prepared as you may be, there will always be surprises and stumbling blocks along the way. The key is not to let the strangeness or unfamiliarity throw you off.

What didn't you know about Canada that you wish you had known before immigrating?

Tom: *"[Canada's] multicultural, which was a lovely surprise, and of course its size!"*

Isabel: *"Provinces. (I had no idea that this division even existed)."*

Sheila: *"Though I knew Canada was big, I had no idea how big and that it could take days to travel across it, also the diversity of peoples."*

Colin, 54 years in Canada, originally from the United Kingdom: *"[I] had to live here for a while before realising how vast in size the country is."*

Richard: *"That Summer's are hot (and humid if in Ontario)."*

There's only so much one can learn from an atlas. While the familiar world map lets us generally know where we are in relation to other places, it doesn't help much in explaining that place. Canada is the second largest country in the world. But it can be challenging to wrap your head around just how big it is. It's just one of the things that surprise newcomers to the country. Many long-term Canadians are amused by visitors from other countries

who land in Toronto and plan to make a quick trip to the Rocky Mountains or the Pacific Ocean.

Canada has some interesting legends associated with it. It's so cold that we all live in igloos; we're the most polite country on the planet, hailed as international peacekeepers, and not Americans. Canada is seen as a place of opportunity, equality, and vast amounts of space where new Canadians can carve out a hopefully better life than the one they left behind. These are just stories about Canada, which are repeated most often to and by newcomers to the country.

The above understandings and misunderstandings are pretty cosmetic. Even if you didn't know how big Canada is or that we have prairies, your experience of immigrating would not be that different. These are facts about the country you will inevitably pick up the longer you live here. But some differences are a bit more immanent – like what Sheila tells us below:

Sheila: *"...it was a complete surprise to find out that we had to do a tax return every year. In Britain at the time, a tax return was only necessary if something changed, like marriage or having children."*

Richard: *"The challenges in setting up a bank account; Getting a credit rating to then rent an apartment, buy furniture, get a phone, buy a car; Also remember car insurance [especially] being prohibitively expensive; Failing my drivers test even though I'd driven 15 years prior without incident."*

Far from misunderstandings about geography and population, Sheila and Richard's experiences here show that there are legal and economic hurdles that can often be extremely difficult to access for new immigrants because they have absolutely no idea that these things are different from their country of origin. Indeed, Richard's experience of setting up a household, despite having arrived in Canada 25 years ago, is a familiar and frustrating experience for most new immigrants. Information gaps can lead to some pretty severe consequences. Although there are numerous guides to immigration, every question is not answered. It's up to immigrants to do the research necessary to integrate into legal frameworks. Thankfully, there are resource centres in most major cities that can undoubtedly assist in addressing these more complex kinds of questions.

In the end, this is just another of the exciting parts of moving to a new country. As prepared as you may be, there will always be surprises and stumbling blocks along the way. The key is not to let the strangeness or unfamiliarity throw you off. Suppose you're confused by something or don't understand how things work here. In that case, there are always resources to draw upon, be they a community centre, immigrant resource hub, handy-dandy *Immigrant Muse* magazine, or a friendly neighbour. One myth of Canada seems to have proven itself correct: we're pretty kind, conscientious people.

Oh, and we spell many words with the letter "u."



ARTIFACTS IMMIGRANTS TAKE WITH THEM TO REMEMBER HOME

By Tom Miller



Immigration is a deft balancing act that requires holding on to vital parts of your home while making space for aspects of your new environment that will shape the future. Many immigrant parents say that their children's accents disappear when they step from the airplane. This writer was certainly no exception. A few decades after emigrating to Canada with my parents, there is little of the Liverpoolian accent left in my everyday speech. Children might intentionally lose their accents to make fitting into a new school and social circle much easier.

But accents aren't something we choose to bring with us. They're just kind of there. When preparing to journey to another country and make that new country a new home, we have to decide what we will bring with us and maintain in the new land. As an ostensibly multicultural country, Canada can seem very welcoming to new additions to the cultural landscape. To understand how immigrants preserve their original culture while living in Canada, we reached out to some immigrants to get an idea of what they carried to their new home.

It is important to note that some people don't bring anything. This article assumes that the people who emigrated here did so by choice and that they continued to have positive feelings toward their country of origin, despite leaving it. But the sad truth is that some people leave their home countries because of persecution, unemployment, or the unwelcoming environment.

If you're an immigrant who chose not to bring keepsakes, that is a valid choice too. Sometimes we leave a place so that we can leave memories behind and have more room to grow and evolve in our new environment to grow and evolve.

So what do immigrants bring with them? Let's find out. This writer has a red and white Liverpool FC dish towel with the Liver Bird, Liverpool's mythical mascot, hanging prominently in his library. It reminds him of where he came from (though only six years old at the time), where his parents came from, and who his family was. It's small, but it offers a moment of recollection of family thousands of kilometres away, both in Canada and even farther out in England.

Sheila, 42 years in Canada, originally from England: *"A necklace my mother gave me. I also still feel connected to the history of the country, not necessarily approving of it though."*

So, when you decided to move to Canada, what did you bring? What parts of your home were so important that you knew you'd have to bring them with you to this strange, new world? Large numbers of immigrants will seek comfort in diasporic religious or cultural centres. Still, the culture you bring with you is much smaller than the overwhelming North American culture already here. These small parts are beacons, reminding us of who we are, where we came from, and why we travelled to this vast and magnificent country. And as Sheila notes, sometimes we can still carry a connection to a place despite the occasionally complicated history.

Colin, 54 years in Canada, originally from the United Kingdom: *"I brought my wife and she is a keeper!"*

Emigrating with a partner does a lot to assuage the loneliness that can accompany setting up a home in a new country. And they can remind you, should you start to forget, about where you came from and some of the great things about your former home. Many immigrant stories involve one partner arriving in a new country first, arranging living space and employment, before bringing the rest of the family over. That moment when the rest of our loved ones arrive in the new country is a beautiful reminder that home is about the people you're with rather than the place.

Isabel, 11 years in Canada, originally from Brazil: *"I brought letters and drawings and notes from friends and family over the years."*

Instead of a commercial or cultural product, some people bring more personal mementoes with them.

Isabel's letters and drawings can be beneficial both when she's missing Brazil and when she's missing the people who continue to make that country an essential part of her life. Photographs of family and history can serve the same purpose. We may not often consider that it's not just the country we're leaving but the people who have made it a home for us for many years.

Richard, 25 years in Canada, originally from South Africa: *"South African Wine."*

Canada tries to be multicultural, but there are a lot of arguments against such a case. The long-standing mistreatment of Indigenous persons throughout Canada's history is a very early example of a lack of multicultural feeling. Although elected officials insist on using terms like "mosaic" and "multicultural," Canada is still very much a country of Western culture, heavily influenced by the United Kingdom and the United States. Anything outside of these two iconic cultures tends to stick out. But isn't that the point? Nothing should fade into the background in a truly multicultural system, and everything should be celebrated. Richard, above, doesn't tell us how much South African wine he brought with him, and, let's be honest when you're emigrating from another country, a good stiff drink is occasionally a necessity! But wine from South Africa is an award-winning, somewhat famous reminder for Richard of the country he left. If you are looking for a genuinely multicultural aspect of Canadian culture, pop into your local liquor store and look at the wine selection.

Tom, 42 years in Canada, originally from England: *"We brought lots of things, I guess - I retained my love of Liverpool (football club and city). The only keepsake that remains for me is my Tankard, presented to me on my 18th birthday, which still sometimes gets used."*

The unfortunate truth is that we can't bring everything with us when we're emigrating to a new country. Transporting furniture and large possessions can be prohibitively expensive. Many immigrants will carry only one or two things with

them, the things they can't possibly bear to part with. The upside of this is that it leaves plenty of room and opportunity to accumulate new keepsakes and new memories of your new home and all of the ups and downs associated with it.





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