



**Taking centre stage**  
A Chinese ballerina's  
immigration story



**Increasing chances**  
An educational focus  
on employment

**MEDIA  
PLANET**

February 2011

# IMMIGRATION

## BUILDING A FUTURE IN THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

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TIPS

FOR  
INTERNATIONALLY  
EDUCATED  
PROFESSIONALS

Former Governor General **Michaëlle Jean** shares her  
story of finding refuge in Canada as a child.

PHOTO: SGT. SERGE GOUIN

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# CHALLENGES



**CONVENING FOR SUCCESS**  
The Internationally Educated Professionals conference is dedicated to connecting qualified immigrants with a Canadian career path in their industries.  
PHOTO: PCPI

TIP

1

ATTEND EVENTS TO EXTEND YOUR PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

WE RECOMMEND

**Canada's Learning Bond**  
An educational head start for immigrant families.  
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**Convening for success** p. 5  
Newcomers gather for tips on furthering their skills.

**Settling out of the city** p. 11  
Why more immigrants are choosing the rural Canadian experience.

Every year, thousands of people leave their **home** country to pursue the safety, freedom and opportunity that Canada offers. Once here however, they face many daunting **challenges** associated with making this country their own.

## The pitfalls of seeking a brighter future

**M**ansour Ali was happy with his career in Pakistan. For 13 years the civil engineer had designed infrastructure for rural development products. But with security becoming increasingly threatened in Pakistan and with a worry for his children's futures, Mansour, his wife and three kids moved to Canada in 2003.

### A futile search

His friends had warned him that finding a professional job without Canadian experience would be a challenge, so he tried to prepare himself—but it was worse than he expected. "I was really shocked. I applied to 200 different places for jobs I felt I was qualified but nobody would respond, even for an interview."

The impact was difficult. "Many times I asked myself, what am I doing here? I should go back home



because I was so happy there doing my job. So I wasn't very pleased at that time."

### Reaching resources

After a year of odd jobs in factories and hotels, he connected with Career Bridge, a paid-internship program designed to connect foreign-trained professionals with Canadian work experience. It led directly to the position he holds today as senior development engineer with the town of Mark-

ham, Ontario.

Stemming from Career Edge, a fifteen-year-old organization of over 1000 businesses, the program gives qualified immigrants the opportunity they need to break into their industry on Canadian soil.

### Providing hope

Tet Lopez-Rabson remembers the moment when she learned she had been approved to join Career Bridge. "Oh my gosh, I was so

ecstatic, like I'd won the lottery. It gave me so much hope." Lopez, an economist in the Philippines, arrived in Canada in 2002. She had struggled in a "survival job," doing phone interviews for six months.

But at Career Bridge, she began competing for jobs exclusive to the program and was soon offered an internship at Seneca College in Toronto. Like Mansour in Markham, she has never left, being promoted from within to her current position as a director of research and planning.

When her promotion came, she turned to Career Bridge to hire a replacement. "It's the only way I could repay Career Bridge for helping me."

Neither Rabson-Lopez nor Ali want to spend much time thinking about where they'd be today without Career Bridge. After all, they're now working on bright futures.

VITO CUPOLI

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## Bridging the employment gap brings hope to newcomers

**The frustration that many immigrants experience when looking for a job in the profession they had back home is now being addressed by Canadian universities, industries and professional associations.**

They have developed a number of solutions to help immigrants "bridge" the gap between their original training and what is required for success in Canada.

York University has created a bridging program for students who want to become accredited in business careers or information technology. The program responds to each student's particular background, according to project manager Nora Priestly. "These people don't need to start back at the 101 level. They have it. They just need the Ontario or Canadian content to be more successful and get the jobs which match their education and experience. Our bridging program

is meant to fill in the gaps."

### Crossing customs

Bridging programs are not only about providing training and Canadian work experience says Lori Dalton of the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario. She works with the York program, which provides outreach to new Canadians. "Different cultures have very different customs so it's not just about getting education and experience; it's about Canadian culture, too. They need to know that they must look someone in the eye when they talk. They need to know how to go through an interview. We may ask, 'how do you think outside the box?' And they haven't a clue what that means."

### Utilizing skill

This year the University of Toronto Law School has stepped up to meet the needs of foreign trained lawyers by offering Canada's only educational program to help newcomers become accredited to practice law in Canada.

"Different cultures have very different customs so it's not just about getting education and experience; it's about Canadian culture, too."

Lori Dalton  
CMA of Ontario

Once students have had their credentials assessed, the U of T program prepares them to write whatever exams they need for a Canadian law license. The process can be eye opening says Gina Alexandris, director of U of T's program. "We've had a couple

who've said, 'The practice of law here in Canada is quite different than I anticipated, and quite different from my experience. What other possibilities are there where I can still use my skill?' That's a success story as well."

And the opportunities are spreading from city to country. "We realized back in 2006 that there were a number of internationally educated, experienced agrologists coming to Ontario. And since there is a demand for competent people, we started a pilot program," says Terry Kingsmill, registrar at the Ontario Institute of Agrologists. Over three years, the Institute has accredited 135 foreign trained agrologists to work in the science of soil and agriculture.

Clearly the Canadian economy has recognized the value of foreign trained professionals and is responding with programs and assistance which can help newcomers achieve their Canadian dreams.

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TIPS

**Ways to get connected in Canada**

- 1 Pick a phone plan with long-distance minutes to stay in touch with family overseas.
- 2 Choose a smart phone and data plan to get access to job postings and email on the go.
- 3 Download apps that make sending and receiving money simple.
- 4 Use apps such as Facebook or Twitter to network with other newcomers in Canada.



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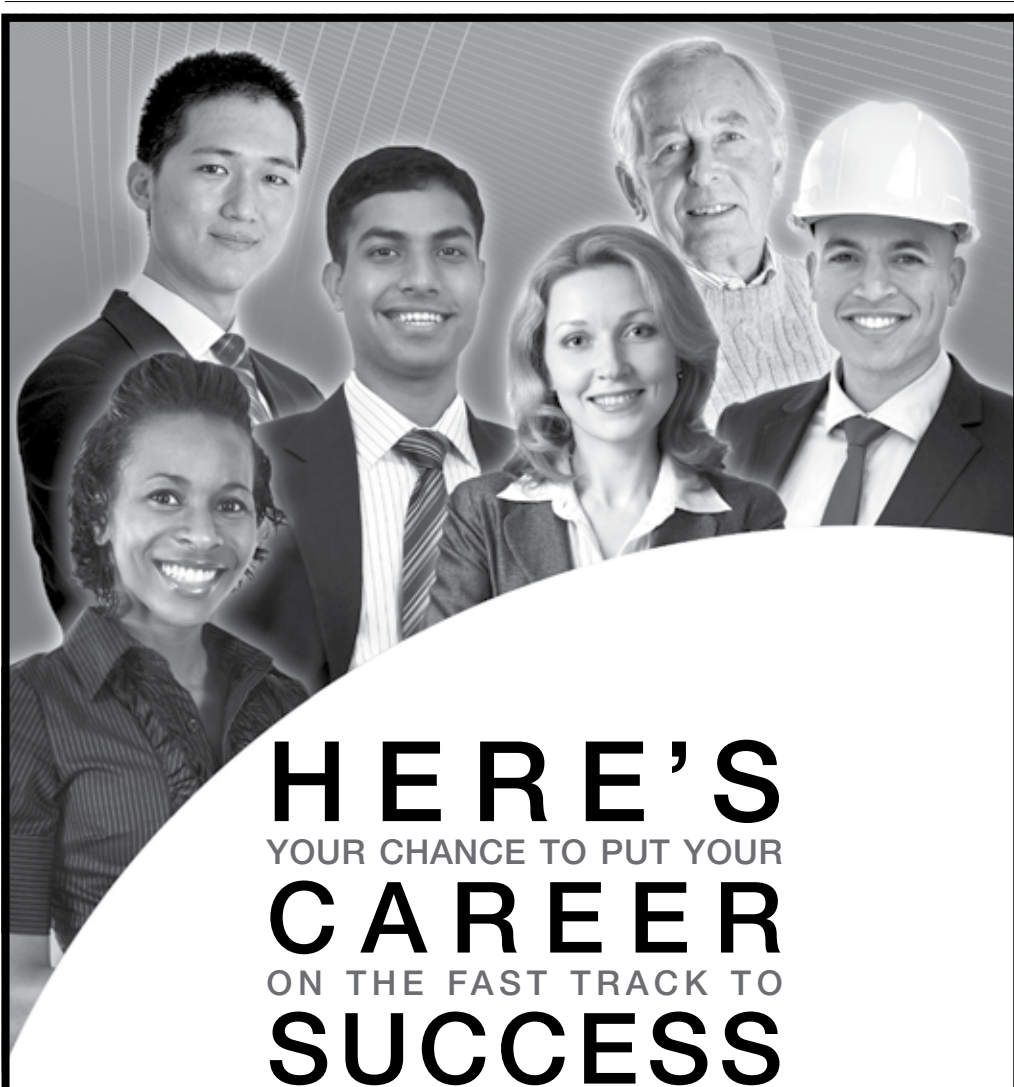


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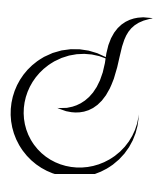
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## NEWS

TIP

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SPECIFIC  
INVESTMENTSSAVING FOR SUCCESS  
Rajani and her son.  
PHOTO: MICHAEL MITCHELL

# The Canada Learning Bond: A great start

■ **Question:** How can low-income families ensure a bright educational future for their children?

■ **Answer:** They can receive up to \$2000 from the Canada Learning Bond to start an RESP.

**Rajani is a smart saver. By opening a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) for her older son, she is also fostering expectations.**

"I'm saving this money just for your studies," she tells him. "He knows that means he has to study!"

Nearly all immigrants come to Canada hoping for a better future for their children, and that includes a good post-secondary education. But many, like Rajani and her husband, struggle to build their income during the first few years. Saving any money can be difficult. In their native Sri Lanka, saving for a child's future is a cultural expectation. "But there we save for children's marriage and dowry," Rajani laughs. "Education is free."

## Additional options

Rajani used money from her child benefit allowance for her older son's



"Most parents who could get the Bond for their children have never heard of it."

May Wong  
Executive Director, Omega Foundation

RESP. Then she learned from her bank that her younger son, born in 2004, was eligible for the Canada Learning Bond. The Canada Learning Bond is a contribution of up to \$2,000 by the Government of Canada into the RESP of a lower-income child. No family contribution is required to receive it, and the RESP can be used toward

the cost of post-secondary education wherever a student decides to study. It can even be used for studies abroad.

## A head start

"I'll do everything I can for my boys," says Rajani. Thousands of families in her situation share similar aspirations for their children. The Canada

Learning Bond can help them give their children a great start. Children who have even a small amount of money put aside for their education are more likely to graduate from high school and much more likely to continue their education past high school.

But most parents who could get the Bond for their child have never heard of it. Right now, fewer than 20 percent of eligible children across Canada have received their Bond. Nearly 900,000 children across Canada are missing out on this start to their post-secondary education. That's where SmartSAVER comes in: SmartSAVER is a charitable initiative that helps families learn how to get RESPs started for their children and how to access government supports like the Bond.

Because Rajani is sometimes able to put her own money into her RESPs, she also receives the Canadian Education Savings Grant (CESG) which matches RESP contributions and is available to all families, regardless of income.

SmartSAVER.org offers easy access to information in 14 different languages for families who want to get the Canada Learning Bond and start saving for their children's education.

## TIPS

■ **Any child born in 2004** or later whose family receives the National Child Benefit Supplement (net income of \$40,970 or less) can receive the Canada Learning Bond: at least \$500, up to \$2,000.

■ **To start an RESP**, both the parent and child needs to have a Social Insurance Number.

■ **A no-cost RESP** can be started at most banks. Parents don't have to contribute anything to receive

the Canada Learning Bond and funds can be invested with no risk in a savings account or guaranteed investment certificate (GIC).

■ **More information** about RESPs and the Canada Learning Bond is available online in 14 different languages.

Read more  
on the web:

[www.smartsaver.org](http://www.smartsaver.org)

## Educational opportunity increases employability

**What would Canada's reality be without immigration? Without the flow of newcomers, our population would be in decline by 2025.**

This is why immigration levels have been maintained throughout the downturn. However, a more imminent danger threatens our prosperity.

It would only take four years without newcomers for the Canadian labour market to contract. But in this case, numbers are simply not enough. Labour market gaps will appear in specific occupations and often at more senior levels. We must not only attract immigrants with the competencies required, but also ensure their talents are harnessed effectively.

## An educational approach

Canada's college system is meeting this challenge. In 1,000 communities across the country, colleges, institutes, polytechnics, cégeps and universities with a college mandate work with

local employers to deliver newcomer-focused programs and services. These include language upgrading tailored to specific occupations, modular courses that address competency gaps needed for credential recognition, mentorship and internship opportunities, and entrepreneurship training. Such initiatives are highly effective, but many newcomers are unaware of them or don't discover them in time.

## Enhancing ability

Immigrants often arrive with limited knowledge of employment requirements and newcomer supports, and may have unrealistic expectations. They are disappointed when their credentials are not automatically recognized and when they cannot immediately practice their occupation. Some spend time and money enhancing their employability, while others lose motivation and settle for underemployment or leave. Again, the college system has pion-

Immigration Minister Kenney and the President of ACCC with the staff of the CIIP office in Manila  
PHOTO: ACCC

eered a solution. Through the federally-funded Canadian Immigrant Integration Program (CIIP), the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) delivers services to newcomers in their country of origin. By directing pre-approved immigrants to the best sources of information, helping them develop integration plans and connecting them while overseas with Canadian employers, regulators,

immigrant-serving organizations and of course colleges, CIIP helps newcomers become more competitive on arrival and is thus improving employment outcomes.

KATRINA MURRAY

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?

Q &amp; A

## Banking for newcomers

**Immigrants to Canada can be overwhelmed by all of the differences between their home country and their new land.**

On top of language, jobs and training, they also need to get a handle on the Canadian financial system. David Kuo is district vice president for Ontario for HSBC Bank Canada. The bank deals with a lot of newcomers and he has some advice:

**What sort of help do immigrants need when it comes to money and banking in Canada?**

Sometimes even the most basic functions can be very different. Our basic terms for instance, such as checking or savings accounts and Interac, need explaining. Service charges will be different between here and their home country, plus how to deal with cash. In some countries they exchange more on a cash basis so people are used to carrying around a larger amount of cash with them.

**Do they show much interest in the financial products that are popular with Canadians?**

The RESP, Registered Education Savings Program, is very popular once they understand the government contribution. For immigrants, one of the most important things is their children's education. They really admire and like the Canadian education system. And they welcome conversations about how to save for it.

**What should be first for newcomers on their financial to-do list?**

The key is also to build up a strong credit history from the start. Some of the new immigrants come from countries where they don't like to borrow money—where lending is not looked upon favourably. Where as in North America, credit history is very important and a credit card can be essential for many things.

**What are they most curious about when it comes to finances?**

If they are invested in the stock market, they want to know about tax implications. How do taxes compare to their home countries? Some countries send newcomers who are very active in stock trading so those people can be very concerned about Canadian tax laws. And they also want to know about the Tax Free Savings account.

**What is the best way for new Canadians to learn how to manage money and financial products?**

Once they're able to find a banker that perhaps knows their language and their cultural background, it's a lot easier for the clients to understand fully and have trust. Myself and some of our staff, we were newcomers at one time. So we have our personal experience and are able to relate that to our new Canadian customers.

**What about if a client has both assets here and in their home country?**

By seeking out an international bank with a great global network that can communicate with their home countries, clients can obtain credit history, validation of employment, money transfers and witnessing signatures.

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TIP

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PARTICIPATE IN CANADIAN SOCIETY TO REDUCE YOUR HIRING “RISK” FACTOR

Loved by many, controversial to some, few would disagree that the **Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean** functions as a powerful symbol of the possibilities of life in Canada. Here, she speaks on how immigrants can **succeed** in this country and her passion to make the world a better place.

# Oh Canada—the things you make possible

## LEADER TO LEADER

**She was barely 11 years old when she came to Canada—a child who had been traumatized by the unrelenting brutality she had witnessed in her country, Haiti.**

A child who had seen her father, head bloodied, deposited on the family doorstep after he had been worked over by a dictator’s goons. A child who went through the trauma of fleeing her country, to seek refuge in a new country, only to live in close proximity to an asbestos mine. She also witnessed her parents’ marriage disintegrate as her father, too traumatized by the torture, struggled, but failed, to shore up the fragments of his life.

This child grew up to become the 27th Governor General of Canada. The Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean’s five-year term ended last September. She left with an approval rating of close to 60 percent and constitutional experts say she did a great job. But she is not resting on her laurels. Madame Jean is now the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) special envoy to Haiti. She also heads the Michaëlle Jean Foundation.

“I remember the repression, the oppression, our friends disappearing, even the public executions. It was a very grim and very dark period in Haiti’s history. People had to flee to survive,” Madame Jean remembers.

Her parents were school teachers and human rights activists. For his ideals, her father was betrayed by his own students. He was tortured by “Papa Doc” Duvalier’s henchmen. “Yet, he was lucky, he survived. His friend, who had been tortured as well, died in his arms,” she recounts.

### “Buried alive”

Her childhood years in Haiti were akin to being “buried alive”. The desperate family sought refuge in embassies. Madame Jean’s father (but not his wife and children) was granted asylum by the U.S. embassy, and made his way to

Puerto Rico. Coincidentally, Quebec at the time was looking for Francophone teachers. Her father applied, and was accepted, to a teaching post in a remote mining community in Quebec in 1967. “A year later, we joined my father in Canada. Before that we were living clandestinely in Haiti, always fearful of getting caught.”

“The experiences of my early years have never left me, and it is important it never leaves me. It helps me to connect with other people,” she emphasizes. She worked as a journalist for 18 years (for Radio-Canada and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), covering stories about people who were traumatized. “It was never just a story to me.”

### What newcomers can do

Participate, participate, participate, is Madame Jean’s advice to newcomers to Canada.

As a young woman, she was very active in the women’s movement, and was part of a group of activists that established shelters for battered women across Quebec in the late 1970s and early 1980s. “That time in my life was very crucial because it made me understand the world I was living in—the country, the justice system, the medical system. We ran campaigns to increase social awareness of domestic violence. We had to convince people that this problem existed and that it violated human rights.”

Life for many newcomers to this country is difficult and she accepts the observation that while the Federal Government freely opens its doors to newcomers, Canadian society doesn’t know what to do with them when they arrive. “How many doctors, engineers and professionals have trouble working in their field because their skills and diplomas are not recognized? I don’t deny that it can be a challenge to make a life in Canada. I don’t deny that. But there is no society in the world where racism or discrimination does not exist.

“The difference between Canada and many other places in the world is that there are avenues to fight such problems. Don’t run away from the prob-

## PROFILE

### Michaëlle Jean

■ **Position:** 27th Governor General of Canada, UNESCO Special Envoy to Haiti

■ **Date of birth:** September 6, 1957

■ **Place of birth:** Port-au-Prince, Haiti

■ **Position:** Journalist and broadcaster

■ **Languages:** Fluent in French, English, Italian, Spanish and Haitian Creole, reads Portuguese.

lem. Join with all the forces in Canada to fight this issue. We have a charter of human rights. We are always looking for solutions.”

Immigrants must remember their cultural roots and continue to speak their mother tongue, Madame Jean, who is fluent in five languages, advises. And there is a practical reason for this—apart from maintaining cultural connections, linguistic ability is always an asset. “I was hired at Employment and Immigration Canada and later at the National Film Board of Canada and the CBC Radio-Canada because of my language abilities, and the fact that I was well-travelled,” she says.

### Exploring a common humanity

Last October, Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the government would provide \$3 million to the Michaëlle Jean Foundation, a non-profit organization promoting citizen engagement through the arts and creativity, with a special emphasis on youth from underprivileged, rural and northern communities in Canada.

The Government would also match funds raised privately by the foundation, to a maximum of \$7 million over a 10-year period.

“The arts and culture can be a very powerful tool to engage young people and bring about change in their neighbourhoods,” Madame Jean says. “This endeavour speaks to my sense of cit-



izenship and my desire to continue to work to develop a sense of belonging and togetherness in Canada.”

Canada is good at celebrating its diversity, but it is equally important to articulate its shared values—something Canadians have not been doing very much of, Madame Jean explains. “This question preoccupied me as Governor-General—what do we all have in common, what can we build on together?” Her drive to better understand Canadian values, even those not deemed politically correct, has earned her stinging criticism—as when she ate a sliver of seal heart in Nunavut in May 2009 to express her solidarity with an Inuit ritual.

### A realist’s vision

In the novel “The Brothers Karamazov”, Fyodor Dostoevsky writes, “In a realist, it is not miracles that generates faith, but faith that generates miracles.” One could apply that observation to Madame Jean’s life—accepting human failings is never an option. Recognizing its existence is a first step. As citizens, we must pursue excellence and lift up as many others as we can. Ultimately, positive change is a society’s miracle.

Her striving extends beyond Can-

ada. A year after the catastrophic earthquake which left more than 230,000 dead, reconstruction efforts in Haiti are still lagging. Of the US’s \$5.6 billion that was pledged at a March 31 donor conference, \$3.2 billion is still owing.

“It is time to start shaking the box and saying, ‘you have to honour your commitment,’ and I am good at shaking the box,” she laughs. “It is a moral and ethical issue. I cannot be distracted. I must stay very focused on this,” she said, four days before jumping on a plane for Haiti.

Madame Jean has been described by a newspaper columnist as an “empathizer-in-chief,” but she is realistic about human nature. She has been at the receiving end of the worst excesses of human brutality, but has also been at the receiving end of the finest.

“I never dreamed my life would be what it is today. But there is no hierarchy of experiences in my mind. Everything I have done in my life is important—my work with battered women is as important as the work I did as Governor General. Taking action as a citizen and contributing to society is paramount.”

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## Centre of Excellence in Immigrant Advancement & Intercultural Education



Bow Valley College embraces Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s vision for a stronger Canada:

*“A safe and secure country with a shared bond of citizenship and values; a country that contributes to support our humanitarian tradition and draws the best from the world to help build a nation that is economically, socially and culturally prosperous.”*

– “Government of Canada - Vision for a stronger Canada”

Through its Centre of Excellence in Immigrant Advancement and Intercultural Education, Bow Valley College reaches out to Canada’s immigrant population – from internationally educated immigrants to those struggling with basic literacy issues. BVC also works with Canada’s employers, providing intercultural education for existing employees and interns within a cosmopolitan context.

As a national leader and the largest provider of ESL programming in Alberta, Bow Valley College offers a variety of career transition services and occupationally specific training aimed at helping Canada stay competitive on the world labour stage.

From programs with internationally trained accountants, nurses, pharmacists, engineers, and physicians, Bow Valley College links new immigrants with the appropriate skills and literacy training creating work-ready professionals.

Since 1965 Bow Valley College has provided work-ready graduates for Canada’s labour market in programs from Business and Administration to Practical Nursing, and from high school upgrading to ESL and career transition services.

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2



3



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1. Applauding a musical performance in her honour at the Senate Chamber.
2. Recording a message prior to leaving for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games.
3. Meeting with two Afghan parliamentarians at Rideau Hall.
4. Jean's first visit with US President Barack Obama.

PHOTO: 1. SGT ERIC JOLIN, 2-4: SGT SERGE GOUIN



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Atul Mahajan, President and CEO of Oshawa Power and Utilities Corp., knows a thing or two about being energy-efficient. His company supplies electricity to over 50,000 customers. To reduce energy losses, they utilize innovative generation solutions including harnessing solar energy. For the company to become even greener, Atul will need to use the full power of his CMA. As a leader it's his job to envision the changes ahead and then help his team make it a reality. With a CMA like Atul leading the charge, the future may be closer than you think. Visit [becomeacma.com](http://becomeacma.com) to see Atul's film.

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**ANDREW SEALE**  
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**AMAZING GRACE**  
Yu loves the multicultural aspect of living in Toronto.  
PHOTO: CHRIS NICHOLLS

"At that moment, I felt that me and my kids were free," says Deena, a survivor of abuse. A mother of two, Deena had no self-esteem after a decade-long abusive relationship. The Redwood helped her secure subsidized daycare for her children, find

Courtesy of The Redwood  
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## PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT



TIP

4

EXPLORE  
ENTREPRE-  
NEURSHIP  
OPPORTUNITIES
**BUDDING BUSINESS**  
**Kanako Heinrichs' Tokyo-**  
**inspired flower kiosk**  
**receives up to 130**  
**customers a day.**  
 PHOTO: PRIVATE

All immigrants face the daunting **challenge** of integrating into the Canadian workforce. Why do some succeed in their new country while others struggle to connect with potential employers? It comes down to **attitude**—and embracing change.

## Why some immigrants fail

Every year, 250,000 immigrants come to Canada with dreams of a better life.

Most of them have educational qualifications exceeding the Canadian populace, but are unable to get employment commensurate with their education and work experience. Some finally get there, but they have to start from the bottom, get retrained and suffer in survival jobs first.

How do I know? I was one of them.

**Issues with integration**

Corporate Canada, with a few notable exceptions, has not been successful at integrating immigrant talent into its workforce. Part of the challenge has been a shift since the 1990s from European-based immigration to an Asian and South Asian-dominated immigrant base, which has resulted in companies struggling to understand new immigrants' cultural nuances. And with the risk-averse nature of Canadian employers, it's easy to see why professional immigrants are often on the outside looking in.

**The secret to success**

But some immigrants do make it. So what is the difference between those who do and those who don't?

Having worked with immigrants for the past 12 years, I have observed huge differences between immigrants who succeed and those who fail. While I often talk about success secrets for immigrants, I want to look at this question from the flip side—



"Most immigrants tend to be unfamiliar with the concept of networking..."

**Nick Noorani**  
 President and CEO,  
 Destination Canada Info Inc

why do immigrants fail?

Here are eight reasons that I hope will prompt a better understanding of what can actually help create positive outcomes for immigrants:

■ **Inadequate preparation prior to departure:** I have met immigrants who tell me "I am deciding between living in Toronto or Ontario." I find it hard to accept that a professional immigrant lands here without having done adequate research not only on the cities, but the professional barriers they will face.

■ **Unrealistic expectations:** Most immigrants I have met expect to land a job immediately in a company at the same level as their home country! I tell them to be realistic and to think about how long it took them in their home country to get the position they had.

■ **Not understanding their shortcomings:** I'm talking language, soft skills, corporate etiquette, etc. Immigrants come to Canada with 90:10 ratio of technical skills to soft skills. Canadian employers want 40 percent technical skills and 60 per-

cent soft skills. But many newcomers can't seem to accept this reality.

■ **Reluctance to change:** I have met hundreds, even thousands of immigrants, and what amazes me is their reluctance to use their geographic change to create other changes. What worked "back home" will probably not work here! A study conducted earlier this year at York's School of Human Resource Management found that immigrants who embraced change were more likely to succeed.

■ **Victim mentality:** The honeymoon period for immigrants lasts a few weeks, which are typically spent sending resumé after resumé in response to job postings. Immigrants then go to a settlement centre and learn about Canadian resumé writing and networking. While they are going through this, the immigrant looks at their shrinking bank balance and fear sets in. That fear leads to anger and, in a short period of time, immigrants get into a victim mentality—full of anger for a system that doesn't recognize immigrant qualifications.

■ **Rearview mirror driving:** The next stage is when immigrants take a job not commensurate with their qualifications. The immigrant now gets frustrated with his lot in life and in order to redeem some of his waning self-esteem, he spends time talking all about what his life was like back home. Often this leads to him packing his bags and leaving Canada.

■ **Living in ethnic silos:** Unable to deal with the newness of interacting with Canadians, many immigrants gravitate toward their own communities where they feel more secure in language and culture. These ethnic silos, however, hold immigrants back by preventing successful integration with the larger populace.

■ **Lack of networks:** When immigrants migrate, their networks in their new country are primarily either relatives or friends they know from "back home". Most immigrants tend to be unfamiliar with the concept of networking, but without it they are missing out on key information and potential opportunities.

**Examining opportunities**

The discussion of Canada's looming labour shortages propelled by an aging population and a declining birthrate was put on hold for awhile because of the economic downturn. The shortage hasn't, however, gone away and corporations need to prepare by being more understanding and welcoming to immigrants. In the meantime, immigrants must take charge of their experience and avoid these failure pitfalls.

## From Tokyo with love

**When Kanako Heinrichs established Queensberry Flower Co. Inc.,** a flower kiosk at Vancouver's Granville SkyTrain Station, she was just looking to find a little piece of heart in her new home.

"I wanted to bring the Tokyo flower shop style to Vancouver," says the small business owner. "I was pretty disappointed when I came here that there wasn't a flower shop like this—so I decided to start my own."

However, it was a bumpy road for the young entrepreneur.

"It was a terrible first couple of years," says Heinrichs. "I couldn't find a job and when I did it wasn't the kind of job I wanted to have."

**Key to S.U.C.C.E.S.S**

While collecting employment insurance, Heinrichs enrolled in a three-month self-employment program run by S.U.C.C.E.S.S—one of B.C.'s largest social agencies.

"That's where I learned everything I needed to know to run the business and there they had the applications for CYBF (Canadian Youth Business Foundation) loans."

CYBF approved Heinrichs' vision and helped her establish her new business. They also provided a mentor—Chen—to show her the ropes.

"I always tell myself do it as though your life depends on it—because it does," says Heinrichs.

Today, Queensberry employs three and is looking to expand in the future.

**Tokyo roses**

Crediting her approach to the "Japanese trait" of extra detail, Heinrichs usually has 130 customers a day.

She is advocates social media for reaching out to customers.

"I think it's very important because the people that want to know about the business will visit the Facebook sites and the blog," says Heinrichs. "The business changes all the time."

**Back and forth**

Granted, Heinrichs' love affair with Canada began when she came in 1998 as a high school exchange student. She went on to study English at University in Edmonton before finally moving in 2006.

Despite the slow start, Heinrichs takes pride in the business she has built and implores newcomers to follow in her footsteps.

"Work really hard at it and believe you can do it," she says.

ANDREW SEALE

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