

# Oral Histories of Immigrants in Peterborough

Includes:

**Critical Reflection and Abstract  
Assessments 1, 2 & 3  
Six Edited Interview Transcripts  
Audio DVD**

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Department: Sociology  
Course Code: 4580H  
Course Name: Community-Based Research Project  
Term: Winter 2011  
Date of Project Submission: April 2011

Project ID: 4136

**Call Number:**

*The support of the Government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Culture, is acknowledged.*



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## **Abstract:**

The purpose of this project was to document the oral histories of immigrants in the Peterborough area. It was designed to increase awareness of Peterborough's vibrant immigrant community and to shed light on their experiences since arriving in Canada. Through qualitative research, nine participants were interviewed and recorded. Their stories were reproduced into a podcast form to be aired locally and posted on the New Canadians Centre website (NCC). Short summaries of the participants experiences will be posted on the NCC website as well. The assessments that accompanied this project were designed to outline the scope and methodology of the project, to offer a context for the data, provide a sociological profile of respondents, and finally, an analysis of the results which included identifying key themes from the study.

## **Critical Reflection:**

This project has opened my eyes to the challenges that newcomers face when they start their life in Peterborough and the amount of perseverance involved in overcoming the challenges they are confronted with. While I enjoyed this project immensely, there were many ups and downs throughout it. There were many times when the project consumed much of my time and was given priority over everything else as there were set backs which delayed progress (such as the Ethics Application). Another issue I had throughout this project was the interview method. As this was my first time working with subjects and collecting qualitative data, I was not familiar with nor prepared for the delays that came with relying on participants to complete certain stages of the project. This changed the timeline for component completions and the timeline I had originally constructed did not account for such problems. One of my main issues, aside from the Ethics Application, was data collection. I had contacted many participants and set up times to meet with them but on numerous occasions, they just did not show up, or cancelled last minute. This was very frustrating as it meant that I had to reorganize my day and time and also try to reschedule and (as was the case a number of times) find new participants. On only one occasion did I interview an individual that did not speak at the level of English required to have their data

included (for ethics purposes). It was not until part way through the interview that I realized that she was not as proficient in English as I had originally thought and so I simply omitted her data from the study.

One area that could be improved is the construction of the timeline to assume delays in data collection. As I was not anticipating so many difficulties in getting participants to confirm a time to meet, or having them show up when meetings were set, I planned my original schedule so that I would have the most time at the end to complete the data analysis. The setbacks slowed everything down, which left me trying to rush through the analysis and podcast completion (which are integral and sensitive parts to this project as they reflect and represent the participants' experiences). Another area which I thought could use improvement is the sample of respondents. I do not feel that the sample was diverse and representative of the immigrant community in Peterborough as there are many newcomers to the city who do not utilize the resources offered by the New Canadians Centre which would automatically exclude them from this study as this is where participants were selected from.

As mentioned, this was my first time exposed to qualitative data collection but on the whole, I think that the process went well and I feel that my interviewing skills improved along the way. By the end, I felt more comfortable interviewing and was able to stray more from the list of questions to elicit longer and/or more detailed responses. Another achievement is the experiences that were documented throughout this study. While I mentioned that I do not think it was entirely representative, I feel that their stories shed light on many barriers that immigrants face in Peterborough, and so, when these experiences are made public, I think the goal of contributing to the enrichment of local culture will have been achieved. What is more, I think that participants' experiences demonstrate well their stories of integration into the Peterborough

community and the way in which the barriers they face have led to their involvement in the local community.

Overall, while this project was a lot of work and I had many unexpected setbacks, I am happy with the outcomes (the podcasts and the short summaries) and think that they will be great for the Peterborough community to listen to and recognize the vibrant group of immigrants within the city.

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**Aims:**

- To contribute to the enrichment of local culture and the preservation of knowledge. This will be accomplished through the documentation of oral narratives from our immigrant community.
- To document (with permission) immigrants' stories of integration and investigate the social determinants of immigrant wellbeing.
- We are aiming to obtain between eight and ten research participants willing to share their experiences with us.

**Objectives:**

**1. *Ethics Application approval:***

- a. In order to complete the ethics application I met with Yvonne Lai (from the New Canadians Centre) to obtain information on confidentiality agreements, follow-up procedures for the research subjects as well as to identify the risks associated with the project. I also obtained a sample of the Informed Consent form that has been used for previous research projects of this nature. I combined the relevant elements from both this sample as well as the one provided by the Ethics Committee. The confidentiality form was not necessary due to my previous employment with the New Canadians Centre, at which time I had already signed the confidentiality contract.
- b. The next step in this process was to meet with Professor Rahman to discuss the document, obtain suggestions for the successful completion of the application as well as necessary amendments. The end result of this process was to achieve the approval of the Ethics Committee, which was accomplished after numerous revisions and amendments.
  - i. This objective required a great deal of preparation and revision as is outlined below in my research record.

**2. *Learning necessary skills to edit narratives:***

- a. I attained this through a two hour training session at Trent Radio (working with Adobe Audition, Nero, and other audio-recording/editing software).
  - i. Utilizing Trent Radio was built in to this project and thus just a matter of allocating time to go in and complete the training (preparation).

**3. *Gain experience with qualitative research:***

- a. Due to my lack of experience with qualitative interviewing, I chose to practice my interviewing skills with close friends (mock interviews).
- b. While completing mock interviews, I went through the process as though it was a real interview. I recorded the interview and asked all the same questions. In doing this, I was hoping to be more comfortable with my research questions, the recording device, build confidence in an interview setting, and gain experience listening to the interview critically to ask the right questions (and recognize opportunities to prompt further discussion).
  - i. By completing mock interviews, I was able to gain practical experience. While reading was helpful, it was much more beneficial to interact with "participants" and thus, the use of my friends as "research participants" provided me with the opportunity to practice my skills.

**4. *Compile a list of research subjects:***

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- a. I did this by working with the staff at the New Canadians Centre (NCC) (for example, the employment counsellor, the volunteer coordinator etc) who were able to successfully provide possible participant names.
  - b. Once this preliminary list was put together, I began contacting individuals and explaining the study to them (what it entails and what we are hoping to achieve). This was done through both e-mail and personal call-outs.
    - i. Working with the NCC was the most efficient way of locating possible participants. It gave me a wide selection of participants to work with from varying backgrounds as all of the counsellors' work with diverse clients for different (but specific) needs. Choosing to work with the staff has facilitated my progress to meeting my objective.
- 5. Conduct interviews:**
- a. The task of completing the interviews, the most important objective in gaining the answers to the questions posed in this study, is being carried out over a period of three and a half weeks.
  - b. I contacted the list of research participants (those who expressed interest initially) and confirmed a date, time and location for the interview. Each interview was of roughly the same format; I began by reading and having them sign the Informed Consent form, explained a bit about myself and began the process. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Throughout the interview stage, I was/ am still contacting possible participants in order to fulfill the minimum six to eight participants (due to time constraints, participant numbers have been decreased from the minimum of eight).
    - i. In order to meet this objective, fulfillment of objective four is necessary. However, this objective is more about preparation than the methods. Preparation includes ensuring that there are additional copies of Informed Consent package, going over the interview questions, making sure my recording device is charged and ready for use.
- 6. Making the data ready for publication:**
- a. This will be completed by working with the recordings (at Trent Radio with Adobe Audition) and making notes of the interview for analysis as I go along.
  - b. I will simultaneously be writing the corresponding short written component for the NCC/ PPCII website.
    - i. Working at Trent Radio is a necessity to complete the editing process and production of material to be made public. The notes being taken while listening to the interview facilitate the attainment of the objective as it provides reminders of what details go with what interview (which is necessary to start the writing process of the short summaries to be posted on the NCC/PPCII website).

**Research Record:**

**Monday September 13** (7:00-10:00)

- Reading through suggested chapters (by Yvonne) on qualitative research (methods, interview tips etc).

**Tuesday September 14** (10:00-11:30)

- Met with Yvonne (NCC) to discuss the project in greater detail.
- We briefly discussed the suggested readings and how it is beneficial for my interview skills.
- Went over suggested methods to complete project, the Informed Consent form, issues of confidentiality and ways to provide this. Also discussed parts of the Ethics Application (i.e.

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the risks of the project, the participant list, how providing confidentiality and the follow-up with participants)

- Met with Professor Rahman to discuss the project, looked over the TCCBE requirements as well as Ethics Application (suggestions offered as to how to complete the Ethics form). Also, briefly covered the way in which project would be assessed.
- Stopped by Trent Radio to set up an appointment with Anthony (for Friday 17<sup>th</sup>, 2:00-4:00) for Studio B training.
- 8:00-10:00 → worked for two hours on the project agreement form (also began filling in the Ethics form).

### **Wednesday September 15**

- Worked for two hours on the project. Completed the schedule for completion, added the necessary information to the Ethics application.
- Edited the informed consent form so that it was relevant to the research that I will be conducting.

### **Thursday September 16** (10:30-11:30)

- Finishing touches on Ethics proposal.
- Typing up the schedule for completion (draft) to send to Prof. Rahman. Sent e-mail with Ethics application and project proposal for his consideration.

### **Friday September 17** (2:15-4:10)

- Met with Anthony from Trent Radio → Studio B training- Adobe Audition, Total Recorder, Nero
- **Achieved objective 2.**

### **Sunday September 19** (5:15-6:00)

- Met with Esteban for first “mock interview”

### **Tuesday September 21**

- Revised project proposal and ethics form (1 hr)

### **Thursday September 23** (12:00-1:45)

- Reading assigned by Yvonne on Qualitative Research Methods (how to ask questions, what kind to ask, what to do with data, coding etc).
- 2:45: picked up project proposal from Soc. Office
- 5:40-7:00: Met with Faye, co-worker at NCC, was a Trent International Student, as another mock interview

### **Friday September 24**

- Drop off project proposal and WEPA form to TCCBE
- 1 hr in the evening dedicated to learning how to use the recording device, loading the necessary drivers on the computer. Also, placed password protection on computer in preparation for up-loading of interviews

### **Wednesday September 29**

- Meeting with Steve from 2:30-3:45 – discussed possible participants, obtained names and contacts of those discussed, went to Trent Radio to make appointment for audio-editing in Studio B

### **Thursday September 30**

- Listened to podcasts (Promised Land on CBC as suggested by Yvonne for ideas of how to create podcast). Listened to 2.5 hrs of podcast.

### **Friday October 1 (2:00-3:15)**

- Trent Radio, working with mock interview recording (for practice).

### **Tuesday October 5** (11:00-1:00)

- Trent Radio completed the mock interview practice edit. From this, I learned a lot about the way I ask questions, asking or rephrasing questions at the same time as the participant is

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talking, “ums”, voice overlap and most importantly, what kind of settings are not conducive for optimal sound quality

- (7:00-9:15): Mock interview, friends, refugee family from Colombia
- Discussed confidentiality form, had this translated to husband by wife, signing of consent form
- Interview completed and once I got home, I listened to the first 15 minutes of the interview and realized that there was an echo from the large fairly empty room though the interview is still acceptable. Would like to set up another time to meet with participant to gain clarification on some details of the story.
- **Achieved objective 3.**

### **Wednesday October 6**

- 30-45 minutes dedicated to reading over comments of Ethics committee; began reworking proposal

### **Thursday October 7**

- Revised ethics proposal, edited: brief description of project, risks (had to confirm that they exist and explain what they are), level of confidentiality and how it is to be achieved (use of pseudonym), raw data (storage and collection), explicitly state no transcripts, explain in more detail the follow-up procedure for participants

### **Tuesday October 12**

- Met with Peri (11:00-12:00) to go over ethics application, discussed the revisions, made and added changes
- (12:30-1:45) Made all additional changes, and e-mailed back to Peri for re-assessment

### **Wednesday October 13** (2:00-3:00)

- Began calling possible participants, contacted four of the suggested nine. Set up tentative times with those who expressed interest. Also, e-mailed three other possible participants.
- Awaiting e-mail reply as well as ethics.

### **Thursday Oct 14** (6:00-7:00)

- Revising ethics application as per Peri`s track changes

### **Monday October 18**

- Met with Peri again to discuss issues with application. Issues included: confidentiality, pseudonyms, interpreters for non-proficiency (9:30 – 10:15)
- (10:15-11:00) Added additional pieces of information as requested

### **Tuesday October 19** (2:30-3:30)

- Met with Momin to discuss project and progress report. Went over application.
- E-mailed proposal back to Peri late evening and awaiting approval

### **Thursday October 21**

- (10:30-11:15) Editing ethics to re-send to Peri
- 11:15-11:25, spoke with participant about cancelling interview as ethics not yet approved
- (2:00 – 3:40) Met with Peri final time for ethics. Made a few additional comments, and what was needed for approval. Made changes in research room and Peri reviewed it again and finally approved!
- **Achieved objective 1.**

### **Friday October 22** (11:00 – 12:00)

- Making calls and sending e-mails to possible participants for study

### **Wednesday October 27**

- (10:30-11:00) Photocopying at NCC of informed consent form
- (11:00-12:45) Interview with Zambia
- (1:00-2:15) Interview with China



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- (2:15-3:00) Meeting with Yvonne to discuss new proposal, ethics application, received a few additional names for study
- (3:15) Trent Radio to make appointment
- (3:45-4:15) E-mail/calling more possible participants

**Thursday October 28** (2:45-4:15)

- Interview India

**Friday October 29** (2-4:30)

- Trent Radio, audio-editing
- Editing interview from Zambia... progress slow!

**Monday November 1** (9:30-11:00)

- Met with potential participant (Albanian), wanted to get some answers about the project. Agreed to participate but only for academic purposes, does not want to be recorded etc

**Tuesday November 2** (2:30-4:15)

- Met with Japan for interview
- (9:30-10:15pm) Listened to interview to make notes in preparation for analysis and written component.

**Thursday November 5** (9:30-11:00)

- Met with (Albanian) for interview. Verbal interview, did not want to be recorded and so I took written notes of her experience.

**Friday November 6** (11:30-12:45)

- Working on Assessment 1
- (1:00-1:30) Trying to get in touch with a few of the original people who agreed to participate and have been difficult to track down.
- (10:00pm-1:00am) Listened to two interviews and began making notes in preparation for analysis as well as the written summaries.

**Monday November 8** (10:30pm-12:00am)

- Revised Assessment 1 (replaced paragraphs with bullets added details)
- (12:00-1:00am) Began researching for essay (a summary of sociological literature around Canadian immigration)

**Tuesday November 9** (4:15-6:00)

- Followed up contacting participants. Confirmed two more interviews for Thursday Nov 11
- Continued working on assessment 1 and researching for essay

**Thursday November 11** (12:00-1:00)

- Waited for one hour, interview participant did not show up
- (1:15-2:30) Listened to and made notes (for reference) on interview from India
- (2:30-3:15) Met with another interested participant explained the project. Participant agreed however did not have time to complete the interview that day- will need to meet up again.

**Friday November 12**(9:15-10:30)

- Listened to and made notes on interview from Zambia
- Corresponding via e-mail with another possible participant (confirmed interview for Wednesday at 3:30).

The fourth and fifth objectives are ongoing parts of this research project. While I was initially hoping to have a confirmed list of participants to continue moving forward with interviews, this proved more challenging. Thus, contacting, interviewing, and making notes are all occurring simultaneously. Furthermore, despite my original intention of editing data while collecting, I decided against this because I am still trying to figure out the way I will arrange the podcast based on the type/quality of (all) interviews.

Canada's immigration policies have historically been shaped by the social, political and economic climate of the state in order to facilitate development. They have been created and implemented in such a way as to be exclusive and exclusionary, perpetuating the composition and status quo of the country. In order to achieve this, Canada has had to exercise stringent control over admission, thus engaging in severe selection criteria (Hier & Bolaria 2006:206). In order to understand the role of Canadian immigration policy in shaping newcomer experiences, this essay explores the phenomena which impede immigrant integration and well-being in more depth. Canadian policies have undoubtedly created systemic barriers for the successful integration of Canadian immigrants. The repercussions of such restrictive legislation include unemployment, lower than expected integration and economic success, learning recognition gaps and immigrant poverty and mental health. Because of this, immigrants have endured extremely difficult experiences of discrimination and exclusion which effectively limits their entry into Canadian society. In this way, they have been denied their right to equality and cast outside of the notion of a Canadian citizen. These issues faced by immigrants to Canada cannot be explored without first understanding the context in which the Canadian immigration policy was developed and the way in which it has been constructed to fulfill the perceived needs of the country. While this paper does not have the scope to trace the policy in its entirety, milestones within it will be touched upon.

Legislation such as the 1906 Act increased the number of prohibited categories of immigrants and also provided official sanctioning for the deportation of undesirable immigrants (Knowles 1997:83). The 1908 Act to Amend the Immigration Act enabled the government to restrict the entry of any immigrant to Canada who did not arrive via continuous journey, from their country of origin (Hier & Bolaria 2006:202). The Immigration Act 1910 served to be

“...another milestone in restrictive immigration legislation” which awarded increased discretionary powers to government appointed officials, thus enabling them to “... regulate the volume, ethnic origin, or occupational composition of immigrants destined for Canada” (Knowles 1997:84). This in effect enabled increased control and selectivity - Canada created the legislation which allowed immigration officers to “pick and choose” who was “worthy” of admission (Knowles 1997:84). With the social and economic turmoil occurring in Canada throughout the 1900s, restrictive measures remained unchanged until 1947 (Dirks 2007; Knowles 1997:131). At this time, a new immigration policy was in the works in response to advocates of a more liberal policy (Knowles 1997:131). In order to appease advocates for and against immigration, the government stated that their policy was to foster the growth of the population of Canada through immigration. On the other hand, out of the need to satisfy those who were fundamentally opposed to immigration, two very important words were added: “absorptive capacity”, which was designed to regulate the flow of immigration based on the necessity of labour in response to domestic labour shortages (1997:131). The flow of immigrants would be monitored so as not to disrupt the Canadian labour market (1997:131). From this, the relationship between Canadian immigration policies and the economy is clear. Moving forward this did not change. The statement on immigration policy for the time between 1947 and 1957 was that selective immigration would be used as an instrument of population growth and economic development (Hawkins 1988:117). In 1957, the Conservative government was noticing the unwelcomed phenomenon of increasingly high rates of unemployment (Lopez 1997:147) they became concerned with the influx of unskilled sponsored workers. In response to the high rates of unemployment, immigration was halted in an attempt to curtail both sponsored and unsponsored immigrants for the remainder of the year. At this point, occupation

became the key component in the selection criteria (1997:147). Changes such as this occurred a few more times before the implementation of the points system in 1967. This system was intended to "... identify and define the various factors affecting a person's ability to settle successfully in Canada, and attach relative weights to them, then immigration officers would have a consistent basis on which to assess potential immigrants" (Hawkins 1988:158). This resulted in categories of assessment including education, employment opportunities in Canada, age, and language proficiency (1997:158). In its preliminary stages, fifty points out of one hundred was enough to earn candidates a pass; in 2010, this number has been increased to sixty-seven (1997:158). This provision tied immigrant selection more closely to the needs of the Canadian labour market (Hier & Bolaria 2006:206). In 1976, an immigration act was being established which is the cornerstone of our present-day policy (Dirks 2007; Knowles 1997:169). This policy marked the first time that the fundamental objectives of Canadian immigration policy were clearly defined (Dirks 2007). The provisions included "... the promotion of Canada's demographic, economic, social, and cultural goals; family reunion; [and] non-discrimination ..." (Dirks 2007; Knowles 1997:169).

It is through understanding the evolution of the Canadian immigration policy that we can begin to understand the role it has played in shaping newcomer experiences in Canada. Immigrant groups have historically been excluded and denied equality and have faced barriers in efforts to integrate into Canadian culture and society. The numerous policies that have come into effect have influenced the way in which newcomers gain entry into Canadian society. Legislation such as the Immigration Act 1910 demonstrates the highly selective process that immigrants go through to gain admission to Canada. Furthering this is the points system which again limits immigration and selects those who are likely to become the biggest contributors.

However, as this paper aims to expose, the points system has not had the intended effects and the Canadian immigration policy is still as restrictive and controlling as it was in its preliminary stages. These inherent restrictions within Canada's immigration policy are symbolic of the sentiments of Canadian society. Immigrants have been traditionally admitted on a "need" basis – that is to say, when there are (perceived) labour shortages, Canada supplements it with more liberal immigration policies. However, as was discussed, when the labour market is down, immigration flow is cut. This is indicative of the view of immigrants as dispensable. They are expendable in times of downturn and recruited in times of need. This notion of dispensability resonates throughout Canada as can be witnessed in the hiring practices and other forms of immigrant integration. They are seemingly convenient for specific purposes in Canada yet are never "Canadian". This poses many issues for Canadian immigration. Newcomers are coming to a country with misleading information giving them false hopes of the "limitless" opportunities of this great country. The obstacles immigrants face can be observed in many aspects of their integration process. These are the systemic barriers (inherent within the policy and perpetuated throughout Canadian culture) which inhibit immigrant opportunity; they are expressed through difficulty attaining employment (due to non-credential recognition and lack of Canadian experience) poverty (due to lack of income) and mental health (which is associated with downward social mobility, loss of social status, and prestige).

### **Immigrant (Un)Employment:**

In 1988, Canada announced a new piece of legislation known as *An Act for the Preservation and Enhancement of Multiculturalism in Canada* which "... acknowledged the freedom of all members of society ..." and posited a declaration that all federal institutions shall "... ensure that Canadians of all origins have an equal opportunity to obtain employment and

advancement within those institutions” (Hier & Bolaria 2006:208). And while this policy sounds inclusive, it does not have a trickle-down effect to all other labour sectors. Immigrants are still faced with inherent barriers in trying to gain access to the Canadian labour market; anti-immigration sentiments are strong in regards to employment, with unfounded claims of immigrants taking all of “Canadian’s jobs” or immigrants as being a burden on social assistance resources. In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that immigration has a significant effect on unemployment in Canada (Islam 2007:52). In a study from 2001, it was noted that only 65.8 percent of recent immigrants were employed which is lower than Canadian born individuals by at least 16 percent ; “... the unemployment rate of 12.1 percent for recent immigrants aged 25- 44 was still twice the rate of 6.4 percent for the Canadian born population (2007:52; 2007:55). The question to be asked is why are immigrants (many of whom possess a university degree) more likely to experience unemployment than their native counterparts?

As was mentioned, the points system (implemented in 1967) was a means to attain skilled immigrants. The categories of education, work experience, age and the like were designed to ensure that Canada was receiving “quality” immigrants who would be more likely to integrate and be contributing members of Canadian society. Despite this attempt by the government in ensuring skilled newcomers, “... research indicates that immigrants are not doing as well as expected financially” (Lopez 2007:IV). In regards to employment, “... newcomers encounter barriers to effectively competing with the native born which include credential recognition, the lack of Canadian work experience and fluency in either English or French (2007:30). Even for those who speak the vernacular experience a more difficult time attaining employment. While they may speak English, they may not speak “Canadian” which sets them apart from their native-born competition. Speaking “Canadian” is a sign of likeness, and cultural knowledge and

awareness thus highlighting immigrant differences and in turn leads to difficulties in locating work.

Research conducted by Herald Bauder indicates that highly skilled immigrants often end up with, what he terms, “survival jobs” (Lopez 2007:1). Bauder states that these jobs are ones which do not require special skills and that the immigrants who typically participate in these positions are well below their competencies, requiring only a high-school education or less; this contributes to the occurrence of downward social mobility among 60 percent of newcomers (2007:1; Alboim & McIsaac 2007:3-4). This downward social mobility can be translated into underemployment which is demonstrated through the fact that immigrants and other visible minority groups are seemingly more concentrated in secondary sector positions which include manufacturing and/or service sector jobs (2007:7). Their placement in such jobs for which they are overqualified can be explained by “... recent studies which point to racial discrimination within the labour market. This is blamed for higher rates of poverty among racialized groups in Canada” (2007:7).

Conversely, under the points system, blue-collar workers are excluded from applying; this is linked “... primarily because there is no need to be fluent in English or French, or have a university degree for many skilled trades” (Lopez 2007:1). It is thus a barrier for this group of labourers who “lack” the skills necessary for Canada, despite the fact that the labour market demand shows otherwise (2007:33). This is the reality of the points system, one which wishes to attract immigrants with skills (job experience, language and education) and upon arrival, leaves immigrants in the unfavourable position of not being able to find work in their field and having to resort to dead end jobs as a means of survival (2007:8). This is problematic because newcomers are not benefitting from their credentials that are so desired by the government.

Once in Canada, their education is devalued and they receive lower returns on it than Canadian born workers (2007:8). Lopez views this as a waste of human capital (2007:8). This underemployment leads to what Bauder terms “de-skilling” resulting from the loss of occupation in their country of origin and coming to Canada working in a position for which they are too qualified (2007:8).

A key factor in the issue of immigrant unemployment and underemployment is Canadian experience, or the lack thereof; because of this, they are excluded from upper labour market segments (2007:8). The lack of Canadian work experience is the most commonly stated barrier by newcomers to employment (Albiom & McIsaac 2007:4). While Canadian experience may be necessary in some areas, it is more generally used as a “... means to mitigate risk when a candidates experience is unknown or unfamiliar, and it is sometimes exploited in a discriminatory fashion to exclude candidates” (2007:4). De-skilling is problematic in that it has negative impacts on the individual’s ability to re-enter their profession (Lopez 2007:28). This can result in lower income and downward social mobility among newcomers (2007:28).

### **Learning Recognition Gaps:**

Credential recognition is a key issue in Canadian immigration owing to the fact that it severely hinders immigrants’ opportunities to participate in Canadian society and, more specifically, the Canadian labour market. The issue of credential recognition is the second most common cited barrier by immigrants to employment (Albiom & McIsaac 2007:4). In a Longitudinal Survey of immigrants to Canada, the following results were recorded: of the sample of immigrants that had their credentials assessed, “... 54 percent were fully accepted while others were either in the process, partially accepted or not accepted” (2007:4). This number is worrisome as newcomers must be in the financial position to pay the large fees



associated with the process and yet do not necessarily reap the benefits of the assessment.

Although one's credentials are assessed, it does not imply that they will be recognized and valued by the end user, like an employer (2007:4). What is further problematic is a potential immigrant cannot assess the degree of devaluation prior to coming (Bauder ?2003:702).

Regulatory bodies within Canada have been set up in such a way that "... frequent additional requirements for the recognition of professional credentials are permanent resident status with the province and Canadian work experience" (2003:702). Bloom and Grant state that the "...

non-recognition of immigrant's foreign credentials is the biggest single learning recognition problem in Canada today ... of those immigrants to Canada, nearly half are coming under

individual or skilled workers and despite this, they cannot gain entry into professional or trades for which they hold foreign credentials" (2001:29). And thus, the non-recognition of foreign

credentials effectively serves as a means of systematic exclusion of immigrant workers from the upper segments of the labour market (Bauder 2003:699). The devaluing of credentials from

countries such as South and Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East is illustrated by the fact that they are particularly restricted from accessing high skill occupations (2003:701).

For example, it is suggested that less than one half of immigrants in regulated occupations

manage to obtain Canadian accreditation and "... among medical doctors, the proportion is as low as 5 percent" (2003:703). Limitations of credential recognition can be further seen in terms of

immigrant income and employment prospects (Lopez 2007:31). In contrast, those who possess

foreign earned credentials in addition to Canadian earned qualifications receive a higher return

on their education thus implying "... that a Canadian credential can convert a foreign degree into a more valuable one ..." (2007:32).

### **Immigrant Integration & Economic Performance:**

When coming to Canada, many immigrants are hoping for better lives only to be misled by the points system. The existence of the points system and their admission under it implies to them that their skills will be valued and meaningful within the country (Lopez 2007:28). However, in actuality, they are having an increasingly difficult time integrating into Canadian society "... primarily due to an inability in finding employment in their field" (2007:28). They are further overrepresented in low-skilled positions while holding a higher education (Albiom & McIsaac 2007:3). Refugees fair worse than those who come to Canada as skilled labourers. In comparison, refugees encounter higher labour market barriers as a result of credential recognition and discrimination (Maximova & Krahn 2010:324).

Lopez states that "... the ability to find employment is the key factor in ensuring effective settlement. Newcomers find 'survival jobs' that are not related to their field, which leads to an erosion of their skills" (2007:28). This is partly owing to immigrants' lack of knowledge and understanding of the Canadian system and its workings; this complicates and slows down immigrant integration (2007:28). Other factors which contribute to the impeded progress of immigrants performing at their maximum capacity include "... [a] lack of systems in place to evaluate immigrant credentials and the illusions created by the points system that allows immigrants to believe that they can work in their profession once they are here" (2007:32).

### **Immigrant Health & Poverty:**

Unemployment and loss of income can be a stressful time for anyone but immigrants are impacted more by the negative effects of job loss. Meanwhile, difficulties finding meaningful employment have similar impacts (Lopez 2007:28). Unemployment has adverse effects for immigrants who are of marginal socio-economic status as it increases the exposure to risk factors of disease while also preventing them from accessing adequate resources for prevention (i.e.

screening tests) (Beiser 2005:S35). Coinciding with this is limited English proficiency which acts as another barrier to preventative services (2005:S35). This results in erosion of finances, self-esteem, and physical, mental and emotional well-being (Lopez 2007:28). It creates frustration among immigrants as they are faced with the inability to integrate and participate in Canadian society. As was noted, these factors have an increasingly strong effect on refugees who have already undergone stressful pre-migration experiences. Factors of "... unemployment, discrimination and non-recognition of credentials continue to jeopardize and compromise refugee mental and physical well-being" (Maximova & Krahn 2010:325). To illustrate, for the first ten years in Canada, immigrants are much more likely to live in poverty than native born Canadians and immigrant families are three times more likely to be poor than their native counterparts (2005:S35). Statistics Canada reported "... between 1992-2000, 1 in 5 of recent immigrants were low-income, which was more than double of Canadian born individual (Lopez 2007:28).

Mental health stressors among immigrants include "... pre-migration experiences, acculturation, unemployment and structural characteristics of a new society that block opportunities or oppress newcomers ... acculturation and unemployment being only too-common threats to well-being of both immigrants and refugees" (Beiser 2005:S38). In addition to this, the marginalization of immigrant groups is associated with the highest degree of mental health risks (2005:S38). Unemployment is a resonating issue among newcomers, and affects every aspect of their life. It is linked to mental health in the sense that immigrants desire to settle down, find employment (which is representative of stability) and when their opportunities are blocked, they encounter frustration as it discourages ambitions, and jeopardizes mental health (2005:S38).

**Conclusion:**

The key issues faced by immigrants to Canada cannot be divorced from the current and historical constitution of Canadian immigration policy. Factors such as the points system which strategically picks and chooses those who are considered admissible to Canada, and posit that it is in sync with the needs of the labour market contribute to the barriers experienced by immigrants. And while the government supports the success of the points system, issues such as the case of the blue-collar are evidence that there are flaws. In this case, workers are not permitted to apply under the current system because they are not qualified and do not possess any of the skills which, Canada posits, the market desires. Although, currently in Canada, there is a need for blue-collar workers but due to the classification of skills, these immigrants are excluded (Lopez 2007:32). And while blue-collar workers are excluded from even applying, skilled immigrants are gaining admittance to Canada while being misled by the system that their skills will be recognized and valuable to the Canadian market because they were deemed so by the immigration legislation. Therefore, upon arrival, immigrants cannot find employment, and consequently suffer from loss of income, downward mobility, declining social status and with that declining sense of self-esteem and self-worth. All of the aforementioned factors work simultaneously in creating barriers for newcomers to Canada. These issues experienced by Canada's valuable immigrant communities need to be recognized in order to raise awareness and facilitate change. This paper has sought to contextualize the study of immigrant integration and well-being in the Peterborough community. Through my research with newcomers to the Peterborough community, I aim to contribute to the enrichment of local culture and the preservation of knowledge, to provide a local element to the phenomenon which has been discussed in this essay. This will be accomplished through the documentation of oral narratives

from our immigrant community. The oral narratives will be used as illustrations of immigrants' stories of integration and serve as an investigative means to explore the social determinants of immigrant welfare. With this paper providing the context of key immigration issues, I hope to raise awareness within the community so others may recognize the immigrant experience.

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This paper presents the findings of a study investigating immigrant experiences of residents in the Peterborough community and will contribute to the field of immigration studies by qualitatively analyzing the sociological profiles of immigrants and their experience. Using qualitative research methods, interviews were conducted with immigrants to Peterborough (N=10) from varying countries of origin. The data were collected for illustrative and comparative purposes. Specific themes can be drawn from this study which will be the focus of this paper.

**Table 1.0:** This table reflects the sociological profile of participants, relevant for the purpose of thematic analysis. *Note. \*\* indicates more than one degree.*

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Age:</b>	<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Country of Origin:</b>	<b>Occupation in Country of Origin:</b>	<b>Education:</b>	<b>Occupation in Canada</b>	<b>Length of Time in Canada:</b>	<b>Interviewed and Recorded:</b>
Alberto & Mariana (Married)	49 & 46	M & F	Colombia	Journalist & Teacher	<i>Mariana:</i> Graduate in Languages** <i>Alberto:</i> Studied Economics (2 years)	<i>Mariana:</i> Unemployed <i>Alberto:</i> Cleaner in department store	8 months	Y & Y
C.K	39	M	Zambia	Public Sector Employee	Undergraduate in Psychology	Part-time duties at his church	1 year	Y & Y
Kantu	31	F	Peru	Manager of Bed and Breakfast	Undergraduate Degree	Part-time sales clerk in retail store	4 years	Y & Y
Kareema		F	Pakistan	Teacher	Bachelor and Master's in Chemistry**	Unemployed	7 years	Y & Y
Datta	76	M	India	British Navy	Undergraduate General Science**	Retired	48 years	Y & Y
Anita	47	F	Kosovo	Not disclosed	Undergraduate Law Degree**	Unemployed	15 years	Y & N
Jesus	45	M	Spain	Professor and Government Employee	PhD	Professor	3 years	Y & Y
Becky	23	F	Malaysia	Student	Bachelor of Arts * Note: Educated in Malaysia-came to Canada as an International Student where she finished her degree	Receptionist	3 years	Y & Y
Ayako	32	F	Japan	English Teacher	Undergraduate Degree	Part-time program planner	5 years	Y & Y

Throughout the course of this study, several prevalent themes emerged, demonstrating that the research is inductive in nature. The purpose of this research was to contribute to local knowledge of the vibrant immigrant community within Peterborough and examine immigrant integration however through the course of the project, specific trends became evident. While the sample group is not large enough to apply the themes to the broader immigrant groups, it is sufficient to say that the trends noted may be widely experienced. Immigrant respondent's experiences will be analyzed thematically. Some commonly observed occurrences include barriers to employment opportunities, lack of credential recognition, utilization of community support, and language barriers. The phenomenon of lack of access to employment opportunities is multifaceted, and is linked with other trends such as volunteerism, credential assessment, discrimination and social networks. It is also related to immigrant integration and well-being as employment provides the necessary income to support immigrants and their families and affords the opportunity to participate and integrate with their local (Peterborough) community.

### **Shared Immigrant Experiences:**

**Table 2.0:** The table below illustrates the themes recognized throughout this study and the corresponding number of respondents who identified with them.

<b>Theme:</b>	<b>Number of Respondents:</b>
Barriers to Employment	9
Use of Community Support	8
Credential Assessment, Recognition and Upgrading	4
Difficulty Finding Housing	2
Language Barrier	10
Maintaining Culture	7
Social Networks	6

### **Impediments to Employment Opportunities:**

Of the ten newcomers who participated in this study, nine of them expressed that they had or are having a very difficult time finding a job in Peterborough. Anita, who has been in Canada for 15 years,



finds this very frustrating. She holds a Law Degree from her country of origin, a diploma from Fleming College, and has volunteered through the Trillium Foundation, a program which was designed to support newcomers in obtaining Canadian experience. She participated in this program for six months, which enabled her to list it on her resume as work within Canada, which she thought would be beneficial. But, other than Anita's temporary employment with a friend, she says that she has applied for many positions, even those that she felt overqualified for, but has not had any responses. She wonders if it is due to her lack of Canadian experience and continues "... [I am not] looking for a job to be a career, but looking to get out, to get experience ...".

C.K is another individual who says that "... the most difficult part of coming to Canada was finding a job ..." and adds that "...even if you come with rich skills, it is just a different ball game here...". C.K has an Undergraduate Degree in Psychology from Zambia, and after just one year in Canada, is beginning a Master's program in Human Resource Management in January. He hopes that having a Canadian education will increase his opportunities, although he notes that "... you have to change everything to try to get a job here ..." and continues that your previous work experience is not relevant here. C.K has many years of experience but "... it does not mean anything unless you have a Canadian education ...". He adds that it results in individuals being placed in jobs where they are not competent and cannot perform their best, but it is necessary for them because they have to survive. An example of this is Alberto, who worked as a journalist for over 25 years in Colombia, but since coming to Canada, where he does not yet know much English, he obtained employment in marginal positions such as cleaning and factory work. These jobs were obtained through the help of a woman affiliated with a religious institution. On the other hand, his wife who holds two degrees and speaks English almost fluently cannot find any work. Alberto says that "... being an immigrant does not mean we are incapable ... we know how to do things, we have an education from our own country, but here we are

categorized as not knowing anything ... we have to accept jobs in factories, construction and cleaning ... and they do not give credit to our education and experience.” His wife, Mariana, adds, “... you have many things you can bring to a new job ... you have to accept the jobs that you haven’t done in your country ... but you have to be real and you have to start with these jobs, the ones at the bottom and this is the reality ... if you need the money to support your family...”. Similarly for Kareema, despite her education and experience, she says that her lack of Canadian experience is a factor in why she cannot get a job. She says that right now, her “full-time” job is networking within the community and utilizing community support services to facilitate this process of finding employment. The lack of Canadian experience is perceived to be a leading problem among immigrants which prohibits their entry into the economy. This has lead them to seeking volunteer positions to add Canadian organizations on their resume as well as to create links within the community which can be used for references and networking purposes at some point.

The two respondents who replied that finding employment was not a major challenge is a Jesus, a Professor who worked in Spain and at first, completed some work through a partnership with another university in Ontario and then later, was offered a position at Trent. Datta is the other who did not experience any significant barriers although his immigration experience is unique owing to the fact that he came to Canada almost 50 years ago, a time when the country was actively recruiting workers. He was also a British subject through the Navy. He secured a position in Canada in 1962 which afforded him the Canadian experience and income necessary to fair well here. As the participants in this study suggest, employment is linked with many other obstacles faced by newcomers and necessitates the need to network and volunteer to get ahead.

## **Social Networks:**

The theme of (un)employment is difficult to discuss apart from social networks, credential recognition and volunteer commitment. They are inextricably linked to the barriers newcomers face when seeking employment. Social networking is nuanced through participants' discussion of the importance of meeting people in the community. When Ayako discusses her search for employment in both Alberta and Peterborough, she brings up this point: "... I just got a job here but it was hard to find; I did not know anyone and did not have any connections in Peterborough ...". Kantu also discusses the same dilemma sharing that "...employers do not know those places [previous employers] and they do not know those people ..." and so she says Canadian employers discount their previous experience because they do not have links within Canadian society. In this way, Canadian employment is linked with social networking as (generally) prospective employers are able to access references and compare previous work history.

## **Community Participation (Volunteering):**

For immigrants, volunteering is viewed as an excellent way to participate and integrate into their community. However, it also serves another purpose. Immigrants volunteer as a means to build up their resume, gain knowledge and experience of employment in Canada, and to make connections with people, although this is not true in every case. Datta says that he volunteers to keep his mind active, that "... motion is lotion for the mind, and that keeping it active, through continuing education and volunteering, is important ...". He volunteers at the Peterborough Hospital and ESL programs. Anita is extremely active in the Peterborough community, participating in such volunteer endeavours as The Elizabeth Fry Society, being a member of the Prior Learning Recognition and Assessment (PLAR), a member of the Peterborough Partnership Council on Immigrant Integration, and a public speaker at the Speakers Bureau. In addition to this, she has invested many years in volunteering at the New

Canadians Centre (NCC). Jesus, like Datta, does not volunteer for the Canadian work experience, like Kareema or Anita or C.K, but rather, he says that he “... just likes to teach Spanish ...”. Becky volunteered with many different organizations within Peterborough to get involved and gain experience.

Immigrants are trying to gain Canadian work experience by engaging in the volunteer sector which allows them to network, and to find out more about the opportunities within the community. They hope that this involvement will lead to their own eventual employment. In this way, volunteering can have positive effects on an individual experience. Regardless, it is a way for newcomers to engage within their community and to learn about the culture and the people within it. It also affords them the opportunity to network and make friends which might be more difficult for immigrants who do not wish to participate. Also important to note is that volunteering is a way for newcomers to participate in their community which thus acts as means of integration into Peterborough life.

### **Use of Community Support:**

Many of the respondents of this study report using some form of community organization which has facilitated their integration into the local community as well as provide opportunities such as employment, and social networking. The most common support systems mentioned among participants included New Canadians Centre, employment counselling offices and religious institutions. For example, C.K utilized the support of his church and has since found a job. Kareema uses many of the services offered by the New Canadians Centre such as programs to upgrade her skills. She is thrilled with these programs because to upgrade your skills is very expensive and so the opportunities offered by New Canadians Centre are invaluable. She adds they also allow her “... to learn more about the people and the community of Peterborough ...”. C.K, Kantu and Ayako relied on the support of employment counselling agencies to help with their resume and CV’s. Becky and

Mariana use the employment counsellor at New Canadians Centre for similar functions, while Alberto uses the support of an individual who works with a religious institution. Overall, many of the respondents commented on the role that community support organizations had in their immigration experience, not only to find a job but for reasons as well. Alberto and Mariana say that Sister Ruth provided them with “... economic, moral, and spiritual support ... providing us with a house, with everything in it ...”. Jesus stands out from the other respondents noting that he has not used any of the community support services offered in Peterborough. This may be due to his existing social ties which enable him to integrate into the community (as he has been coming to Canada since 1988). His profession and job offer meant that he did not have to use community resources for these services.

### **Credential Recognition:**

Credential recognition is a big problem for immigrants as many hold degrees from their countries of origin, only to find out that they are not recognized here. This barrier prevents newcomers from accessing employment which serves as a means of integrating into the community and contributing to positive well-being. As is illustrated in Table 1.0, ten of the ten respondents have attended university, and ten of the ten have completed at least one degree. These numbers are outstanding especially when compared with their responses to their education and the problem of accreditation. Mariana, who holds two degrees and has many years of teaching experience in Colombia, would have to go through many processes to upgrade her skills to be able to teach in Canada. Kareema is another example, where she holds two degrees and a Master’s but she would also need to take additional courses to meet Canadian standards. Another problem with the lack of recognition is that to upgrade as is required, immigrants must be in the financial position to do so but in many cases they are not because they are not working or working for minimum wage (sometimes less) and they cannot afford to upgrade. This is true in the

case of Anita who mentioned that she was interested in going through with the process but lacked the finances to do so.

### **Assessments:**

Another reality for immigrants coming with an education is the assessment of their credentials. I have discussed the possibility of non-recognition but the assessment is also problematic in that it does not guarantee employment for immigrants. Kareema illustrates this well; after having her credentials assessed, it was decided she fulfilled the requirements of an undergraduate degree but she says this has not helped her get a job. Despite it being an undergraduate degree, it is still from an institution outside of Canada, which may or may not be known by employers.

### **Finding Housing:**

Locating accommodation was not cited as a significant problem among newcomers who were in the position to purchase a house. Only two of the ten participants noted that this was an area in which they had difficulty. When it came to renting, it was more difficult as landlords ask for references and notes from your (Canadian) bank. This was true for Jesus who because of this barrier, opted to purchase a house, although, this could be problematic for other newcomers to Peterborough who may not be in that financial position. Datta was the other individual who mentions that housing was a problem, though this is not specifically linked to his experience in Peterborough. In his time living in Brampton in the 1960's, he described difficulties finding housing which were linked to racism and discrimination as well as racial self-consciousness. He lived in a basement apartment for 14 months until one day the landlord told them that the neighbour was objecting to them living there because of the cultural difference and so Datta and his wife had to leave. After this, they decided they were going to buy their own house, a semi-detached because he said "... I am different looking; we wanted a separate house ...". He was worried about other people saying things like "... that brown man cooking

his curry and smelling up the place ...”. But, he does not describe any difficulties finding a house in Peterborough. From these experiences, it is evidenced that securing housing was not a significant barrier in newcomers’ integration and settlement in to the community.

### **Maintaining Culture:**

Many of the themes discussed thus far are linked to immigrant integration into the local culture, but nearly all newcomers expressed barriers in maintaining their own cultural traditions such as practicing their religion and accessing the food they like to eat.

Ayako, Becky and Kareema all note that it is very difficult for them to eat the food that they want because they are unable to get it in Peterborough. Both Kareema and Becky admit that they go to Toronto to purchase their groceries, where they can get access to the types of food they like to eat. Becky says that “... sometimes, with a bunch of friends, we go to Toronto and just do a huge grocery shopping spree ...”. Kareema says the same: “... most of the things we use in the kitchen are not available in Peterborough, especially Halal meat and spices and so we go there [Toronto] once a month to stock up on groceries ...”.

The lack of religious institutions and activities and their availability was also cited among participants. Kareema notes that the mosque is only open one day a week and that her and her family must go to Toronto to participate in the large Muslim celebrations saying that there is not the opportunity to do so in Peterborough. Kareema also explains that her children are the only Muslim children in the class and that the teachers here do not know of Muslim holidays. She cites the example of a recent religious holiday where the girls had to go to school on a day they would normally be partaking in festivities and henna because of the lack of knowledge in Peterborough. Becky and Ayako also say that they are not able to practice their religion in Peterborough because there are no

institutions where they can do this but for Ayako, she says that she will sometimes go to Christian churches even though she is not Christian, as it is a way to meet people and get involved.

### **Language Barrier:**

Despite the fact that many newcomers to Peterborough had some or a good understanding of the English language, all of them identified this as a major barrier in their immigration experience. The language, pronunciation and enunciation of words are areas where they felt “othered” because of their accent and thought no one could understand them. For Datta, he still feels conscious of his accent, as when he is volunteering with ESL students in Peterborough, he feels he has to “enunciate his words more clearly, to tone down his accent, and to re learn some of the English ... I had to slow down a bit because the English speak a bit faster, and I had to get the Canadian terminology ...”. Anita reflects on her experience remembering that she did not know English and feeling very isolated. Alberto is another individual who also does not know much English and he describes his difficulties living in Peterborough without it: “Without the language is very difficult; no one can understand you and asking for basic things like milk, or bread is impossible ...”. His wife, Mariana adds, “... the first problem is the language, if you do not know the language, you are totally lost. You cannot understand, communicate or express your ideas or how you are feeling ...”. Mariana’s thoughts are representative of many other participants in this study. The language is a barrier to integration and involvement in the Peterborough community and without it, as the participants describe, it is very difficult to get involved, to network, to make friends and the like.

### **Conclusions:**

While it is true that every immigrant experience is different, this study demonstrates that there are many similarities in the in the way that they can (or cannot) integrate into the Peterborough community. As mentioned, the intention of this study was to investigate immigrant integration and



barriers, use of community support systems, social networking and language among others. What is clearly seen through this is that immigrants want to be active members of the community. They want to attain employment and they engage in volunteer organizations to increase their knowledge of the Canadian workforce and the people in their community. Another conclusion is that immigrants to Peterborough (though I am not limiting it to immigrants to Peterborough) are resilient. They come from various countries with various economic backgrounds and come here starting on relatively level playing field. The issue of Canadian work experience and the lack of social networks place many immigrants in the same position when looking for a job. Despite the barriers the newcomers in this study have discussed, they have found ways to engage within the community, to volunteer to gain Canadian work experience, to utilize community support services, to network and meet people, all the while adjusting to a new country, new city and new way of life.

**Appendix A:**

<b>Barriers to Employment</b>	<b>Use of Community Support</b>	<b>Credential Assessment</b>	<b>Housing</b>	<b>Language Barrier</b>	<b>Social Networks &amp; Volunteering</b>	<b>Additional Barriers and Difficulties</b>
<b>C.K.</b>	<b>C.K.</b>	<b>Kareema</b>	<b>Jesus</b>	<b>Alberto</b>	<b>Kantu</b>	<b>Kantu</b>
<b>Becky</b>	<b>Ayako</b>	<b>Mariana</b>	<b>Datta</b>	<b>Mariana</b>	<b>Ayako</b>	<b>Ayako</b>
<b>Kareema</b>	<b>Mariana</b>	<b>C.K.</b>		<b>C.K.</b>	<b>Anita</b>	<b>Kareema</b>
<b>Ayako</b>	<b>Alberto</b>	<b>Anita</b>		<b>Becky</b>	<b>Datta</b>	<b>Mariana</b>
<b>Alberto</b>	<b>Kantu</b>			<b>Anita</b>	<b>Jesus</b>	<b>Alberto</b>
<b>Mariana</b>	<b>Anita</b>			<b>Jesus</b>	<b>Kareema</b>	<b>C.K.</b>
<b>Anita</b>	<b>Kareema</b>			<b>Datta</b>		<b>Becky</b>
<b>Kantu</b>				<b>Kareema</b>		
				<b>Kantu</b>		
				<b>Ayako</b>		

“Because of my work in Colombia, I have been threatened by extreme rightist and leftist groups ... as the press, we are between a war that is not ours.” Alberto speaks of his job in his native Colombia as a journalist, where he says that his job is to report the news. After an incident which put a member of the guerrillas behind bars, Alberto and his family became “under the obligation of leaving that part of the country...”. Alberto explains, “I went to Bogota, and my wife (Mariana) stayed for a while in Cali and this is when the security problems started for my family... I changed jobs ... and some other people located me again for this work.” Alberto’s position within the news industry placed him and his family at great risk; they began receiving threats from groups outside of the government saying they were going to kill him or a member of his family. For the safety of his family, they decided to leave Colombia.

After spending a few months in the United States waiting for his wife and eldest son, they made their way to Canada, arriving in April 2010. At the border, they were met by a Colombian case worker and she told them about a woman named Sister Ruth Hennesey in Peterborough, whom would be able to help them. And so, without knowing where Peterborough was, or anything about it, they made the journey based on trust. The family speaks highly of the support they received from Sister Ruth, who provided them with a home in addition to moral, economic and spiritual support.

Mariana and Alberto describe the time leading up to their refugee hearing, saying it was very stressful: “We were in limbo ... we didn’t know what was going to happen to us.” But they describe their process as quick and were flooded with relief with the positive outcome of the hearing.

They explain that they encountered hardships such as the language and finding a job. While Mariana and her sons had some English, Alberto did not speak any. When they arrived in April, there was no room for him in the English classes at Fleming and so “... he had to wait to find someone to teach him and for him this was very hard.” Mariana says that while she knows English, she too feels lost sometimes with all of the documents and paperwork they must fill out.

Mariana and Alberto share their frustration about the barriers they are faced with when looking for employment. Alberto says, “... being an immigrant doesn’t mean we are incapable ... we know how to do things, we have an education from our own country, but here we are categorized as not knowing anything ... we have to accept jobs in factories, construction and cleaning ... and they do not give credit to our education and experience.” Mariana adds, “... you have many things you can bring to a new job ... you have to accept the jobs that you haven’t done in your country ... but you have to be real and you have to start with these jobs, the ones at the bottom ... if you need the money to support your family, you need to do it ... ”.

Despite only arriving in Peterborough eight months ago, Alberto has obtained a cleaning job and a factory job, while his wife is volunteering with an organization where she can use her teaching skills. Their most memorable experience was waiting for the hearing, “... when the people say do not worry, you are safe ...Welcome to Canada!”

It was the winter of 1962 when Sandy came to Canada; he had little more than light weight Naval clothing, unprepared for the winter ahead.

Before this, Sandy was a member of the Indian Navy studying electrical aviation in England. It was here he met his wife, Pat, only to be discharged from the Navy as marrying a foreign national was not allowed. When considering their options, Sandy did not want to go back to India because of the social structure and did not feel at home in England due to the hostility exhibited towards Indians. His wife saw an ad in the paper "Opportunities in Canada". Sandy applied, and then received notice that the job was his if he could make it before 1962. Since then, he has never looked back.

Getting to Canada was not easy as there was confusion around Sandy's nationality. In the eyes of British immigration officers, Sandy was a British subject (as he was born in India under British colonial rule). This was not true in Canada – Sandy remembers them turning him away saying "sorry we don't take people from India". He and his wife persevered and went to another immigration office where they said "yes, you have a wife, you have a job – do the medical".

Sandy and his wife first settled in the Toronto area with \$100.00 dollars in their pocket. The first thing they had to do was find housing. While at the grocery store, they saw a sign "basement apartment for rent" and moved in right away. They were there for 14 months at which point the landlord said they would have to leave; the neighbours were objecting to him living there.

Sandy describes some of the special challenges he faced when he came to Canada. Within the first week here, his wife had a miscarriage. They did not have insurance and so they had to pay \$69.00 from the \$100.00 they came with (not including the \$19.00 they had to pay in rent for the first week). Language was also a barrier for him; despite speaking English, he felt that he had to enunciate his words so that others could understand him. He also says that his children experienced discrimination in the school and says that his daughter recalls being beaten up with a copper pipe.

After working in the greater Toronto area for 36 years, Sandy and his wife moved to Peterborough to retire.

He has many things he considers achievements since arriving to Peterborough. He wanted to keep his mind active and so he went back to college and received another diploma. He also regularly volunteers at places such as the Peterborough Hospital and a school, tutoring math and english.

Sandy concludes by saying: It is not easy to progress, but if one is willing to work hard and persevere, the sky is the limit. Sandy concludes by saying " ... thus fulfills the dream of a typical poor immigrant!"

Ayako was led to Canada through her desire to learn English, leaving her native Japan in 2005. She decided that coming to Canada was a good option because of the quality education, the representation of a safe country and the positive image of Canada. She studied in Western Canada for two years and felt that she had learned English and accomplished what she had come for. During this time, she met her husband. After spending the rest of her university fund on travelling with her husband, they settled in Peterborough in August 2010. Her husband chose Trent for a Masters program.

Ayako speaks of the difficulties she faced upon arriving in Canada, the main one being the language and pronunciation. Here she shares one of her first experiences in Canada: "... I arrived in Vancouver and I had to take a Greyhound to Lethbridge, Alberta, and I needed to change my bus at Calgary, but I didn't know which bus to take, so I asked a driver - I want to go to Lethbridge. [The] driver didn't understand my pronunciation and so I kept asking, where is Lethbridge? Finally he told me that there was no such place, "go away" and I was worried I would miss my bus so I pulled out my ticket to show the driver and he said "oh *Lethbridge*" (emphasizing the pronunciation)". She explains that these pronunciation errors made her feel really foreign, like no one understood her.

Other challenges Ayako experienced included culture differences. She explains how in Peterborough, she cannot access the food she wants to eat. Another difficulty is social interactions. She compares the quiet and humble social interactions of Japan, which are considered respectful, with the more outgoing and assertive interactions in Canada. For her, it was very difficult to change that when it came to meeting with professors or in interview settings.

For Ayako, she considers getting a job a major accomplishment. She is working as a Day Program Instructor and feels like she has stepped up a level from her employment in Manitoba. Looking ahead, when the time comes for children, she is eager to teach her language because she says "... losing language is losing culture ..." and she would like her children to be raised with both cultures and ideally moving back and forth between Japan and Canada.

Ayako's advice to other newcomers:

- Meeting people changes everything
- Connect with your community

After a more than three year process, Kareema and her family left Pakistan in pursuit of educational opportunities for her husband. Kareema, her husband and their two year old daughter arrived in Mississauga, Ontario in February 2003. After spending three years in Mississauga where her husband was working with a pharmaceutical company, they moved to Kingston where he was admitted to a PhD program. After one year there, her husband switched to Trent University which brought the family to Peterborough in 2007.

Kareema discusses some of the challenges of living in a small (by comparison) city and describes the limited opportunities in terms of employment. She says "... for one and a half years I have been looking for a job here ... I have an education background, a Masters in Chemistry and a Bachelor of Education...but here I need to change my career and for that I have to learn more skills." Kareema has been an active participant in community programs to increase and broaden her skill set. She says these programs have been very helpful because there are financial problems; "... it is expensive to upgrade skills and as my husband is a student and we have three children, it is hard to pay to go back to school because if we are both in school, we would not be able to pay rent and childcare." She went through a credential evaluation and they told her what courses she would need to take to meet Canadian standards. This is the reality for Kareema, she feels that her skills are not applicable here and so volunteer work is necessary which has allowed her to "...know more about the community, the people and the work."

Additional challenges include the language "...because although we have English, living in Mississauga where the South Asian community did not speak English, I was nervous to speak it."

Kareema describes experiences where she felt different for like having to go to Toronto for Muslim celebrations and shopping for the food which they cannot access in Peterborough, such as Halal meat. Muslim religious holidays are not practiced in Peterborough and so on those days, her daughters still have to go to school as these are not national or Christian holidays. But Kareema draws a positive experience from this; her youngest daughter told her teacher at school about a holiday and her teacher sent home a note asking Kareema more about it. And so, she wrote up an article explaining their religious holiday and her daughter's teacher shared it with the class.

Despite her children being the only Muslim children in the class, Kareema says her family practices their Muslim holidays but also Christian ones for she says "...we are Canadian too."

In 2006, Kantu met the love of her life, a Canadian tourist visiting her hometown of Cuzco, Peru. By the end of his visit, it was decided: Kantu was coming to Canada. The first obstacle was obtaining a visa. Her first application had been declined but this did not discourage her from trying again a short time later. This time, her application was approved and Kantu was granted a visa to come to Canada. She arrived in Toronto in February where she met up with her husband to-be and they married a short time later.

Kantu says that one of the special challenges she encountered was "... having to start over, to be strong enough to adjust your life for a different culture." But Kantu thinks of herself as brave, for having the courage to leave her family, friends and her old way of life for something completely unknown.

One of the difficulties Kantu experienced was not having a work permit. She said that she did not want to sit at home all day and so she started babysitting. Once she acquired her work permit, she thought it would be easier, but it actually was not; Canadian employers still wanted Canadian work experience which she did not have. And so, Kantu volunteered at St. Michaels Hospital. Other difficulties included the weather and the cultural differences.

After three years in Toronto, Kantu's husband got a job in Peterborough. She has been in the region for less than eight months and has been eager to find employment but she shares her frustration, saying that she "... has a lot of experience but not here and so it is not valuable." She is university educated and wishes that employers would give the opportunity to work because "... it hurts having to start over again." But, through making use of community support services such as the New Canadians Centre and other employment services, Kantu was able to secure a job she enjoys and she feels that she is learning a lot while gaining Canadian work experience.

Kantu describes one of her most memorable experiences and achievements as buying her first house; "... it was something that belonged to me and my husband but it was mine ... after I left everything in Peru." She also describes her new job as an accomplishment too.

Kantu will be writing her Canadian citizenship test in the near future and describes her excitement about being "Canadian" and having a Canadian passport, saying she will "... feel so much freer!" At the same time, she says she will never give up her Peruvian citizenship, as she is both Canadian and Peruvian.

Kantu's advice for other newcomers:

- Use the community support systems as much as possible!

In 2008, LM arrived in Peterborough after receiving a scholarship to study at Trent University. In January 2009, her husband, C.K joined her after settling their affairs in Zambia. They came to Canada so that L.M would have increased opportunities for success in her academic life. When they arrived to Canada, they did not have any arrangements made however, they did know one Zambian family who welcomed them in to their home.

Since in Peterborough, C.K. has made use of community support centres, a notable one being the Baptist church and the New Canadians Centre.

While C.K is happy in Peterborough, he expresses his frustration in finding a job. “Finding a job is one of the most difficult parts about coming to Canada. Even if you come with very rich [skills] it is just a different ball game here.” His experience in finding a job has not been a pleasant one. C.K holds a university undergraduate degree and has many years of experience in the public service sector in his country of origin. Upon coming to Canada, he also had his credits assessed through one of the international assessment agencies. Although, he feels that this means nothing here. He believes that employers do not look at what international experience can bring to a job, rather they focus on the way things have always been done and so he mentions that it was important for him to change everything to try and get a job here. He used community support services to tailor his resume and CV to fit the “Canadian” way but notes that this is still not enough. After applying to many positions, even ones where he felt that he was overqualified, he was never given the chance to be interviewed.

For him, the language is also a barrier. Despite the fact that he speaks English (after learning it in school in Zambia), there is still the issue of different pronunciation which sets him apart from others. Another factor which contributes to the difficulty in finding a job is the requirement of Canadian experience. C.K expresses frustration towards this; he wonders how you can get the experience if no one is willing to employ you. To gain some Canadian experience, C.K says that he actively volunteers but even this has not been very easy to get. In the end, he says, you may have to get a job that you are not competent in because “... you have to survive.”

Now, C.K has managed to obtain part-time employment and is happy where he is; he feels that he is using some of his skills and knowledge that he brought from Zambia. C.K and L.M are also the proud parents of a baby boy, born in Canada in 2009.

C.K’s tips and advice to other newcomers:

- Make use of the available services
- Get involved in your community (through volunteering, community involvement and the like)
- It may not work out for you. Wherever you are coming from, you will have to make changes so be adaptable.