

WELCOME TO CANADA

*“To understand a country, you need to be a part of it, think of its culture, think of the opportunities and challenges it will present, and also think of your contribution, because you too can help by building a ‘better you’ through your immigration process.” Excerpted from **Immigrant Women’s Health Promotion Project – A Guide to Prospective New Immigrants to Canada***

Starting over comes with its share of apprehension, and it’s no different when you begin your job search in Canada. The suggestions in this book will help you prepare for this important undertaking. First of all, there is a high chance you will not immediately get a job at the same level or in the same field as the job you have left or are leaving, so be prepared to make some adjustments.

While you should look for opportunities in your field of work, many people have taken jobs that do not carry the same titles or responsibilities they had. Sometimes, gaining access to the workplace (or getting a foot in the door, as it is commonly referred to) becomes more important than a title.

The situation is improving as governments and businesses are waking up to the fact that internationally educated professionals (the majority of whom are visible minorities), with their diverse talents and cultures, could be Canada’s competitive advantage.

At the time of writing this book, the Government of Ontario had introduced *The Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act* that would apply to 34 regulated professions including physicians, accountants, teachers, lawyers, engineers and others. This Act would require regulatory bodies to adopt fair and transparent registration processes, which would help newcomers find work in their fields sooner.

Research is currently on the way to examine the barriers that visible minority professionals, managers and executives face with regards to their career development and advancement in corporate Canada. This will definitely have an impact on internationally educated professionals.

A Lesson in Self-Esteem

I might as well advise you right now that no matter how confident you feel in yourself and your capabilities, you are going to face many situations and challenges that will initially and deeply shake your self-esteem and test your perseverance; your ability to survive. You are going to ask your self many times “Why did I...?” This can be quite frightening, but this is the point at which you will want to stay away from the naysayers; negative people and chronic complainers who will drag your spirits down instead of lift you up.

The positive aspect is each experience is a temporary condition. You will regain your self-esteem once the initial shock wears off and you begin to focus and put into practice the suggestions in this book. As you associate with people who are keen to see you succeed and who will encourage you to believe in yourself, you will be equipped and ready to successfully meet the challenge of change.

For the reader who might be wondering why the expression “Eh?” has been appended to the book’s title, here’s the reason.

While speaking, a Canadian will invariably intersperse his or her conversation with “Eh?” How that came about I don’t know, but it’s something that’s distinctly Canadian.

The “*No Canadian experience*” piece is a more serious matter. It’s a statement attributed to those who have never previously worked in Canada. In fact, under the Terms and Conditions of Employment section of the Ontario Human Rights Code, such a statement should not be used by employers as such questions sometimes pose particular problems for recent immigrants. The section further states that employers should try to ensure the candidates have trade or professional qualifications without requiring Canadian experience. (See *Human Rights at Work*, Pg. 44).

The other comment new immigrants frequently hear is “*you’re overqualified*”, so, be forewarned, but don’t let comments like these prevent you from persevering. Most times it’s a fear of the unknown that generate these kinds of responses. Some employers may think you are not able to perform the job; others may think you won’t stay with them for long, and others might just not want to take a chance on you. Damindra Dias, an accounting professional who arrived from the United Kingdom more than 30 years ago was told about her lack of Canadian experience and her over-qualification. That did not stop her from moving her career forward and eventually getting to the top of two very well-known international companies.

It began when her first employer took a chance and offered her an accounting clerk’s position. They recognized the value she had to offer. Damindra also credits her mentors with her success:

The two most important aspects of climbing the corporate ladder are someone within the organization willing to take a chance on you and then willing to mentor you. Without a genuine mentor in each organization my success would have been limited.