

5 MYTHS ABOUT IMMIGRANTS

IN 2010, more than 280,000 immigrants became permanent residents of Canada. Approximately 40% of them came to Ontario. Since 2007, just over 1,200 recent immigrants have selected Grand Erie as their home.¹

Many immigrants face barriers when settling in Canada. Language difficulties, lack of Canadian work experience, lack of recognition of foreign credentials, difficulty finding jobs, inadequate transportation and access to health services have all been identified as challenges newcomers can face.²

Compounding these barriers and challenges is the prejudice that some immigrants encounter. These prejudices are based on assumptions about immigrants, rather than facts. This booklet challenges some of those assumptions.



Grand Erie
Immigration
Partnership

JIA'S STORY

Jia Durand came to Canada from China in July 2008 with a good education and work experience. She was ready to work and contribute to her new community. Jia has an accounting diploma and a Bachelor's degree in English from China, along with experience working as an accountant. This level of education and experience would help many Canadians find a job. Jia found that while she had strong credentials, she was lacking Canadian work experience and struggled to find a job in her field. "When I first came to Canada I worked in a factory job I found through a staffing agency," she said.

Jia wanted to work in her field and moved to British Columbia where she thought she would get more Canadian work experience through the large Chinese community there. Jia found work but was laid off after a couple of months. She continued to work at jobs below her experience and credentials.

Eventually, Jia and her husband moved back to Brantford when her husband found a job in this community. Jia was still struggling to find a job that matched her skills. "I went back to the staffing agency and worked in an office for a year but again I was laid off." Jia turned to an Employment Ontario office for help.

Through the Second Career program Jia enrolled in a general business course to update her education to Canadian standards. She was also referred to the Mentoring Skilled Newcomers program and was matched with the Manager of Administrative Services at St. Leonard's Community Services. "I'm very lucky...I was able to gain valuable experience in the Canadian workplace and made contacts who have helped me apply for jobs." Jia is completing her general business course and will then begin a one month co-op placement. With the Canadian experience Jia has gained from the Mentoring Skilled Newcomers program and the training she has received through Second Career, Jia will be better equipped to apply her Chinese education and experience to the Canadian marketplace.

MYTH 1 Internationally trained professionals are not as qualified as Canadian professionals

Fact: Foreign trained professionals such as doctors, accountants, engineers, teachers, social workers and others must have their credentials reviewed by accredited Canadian assessment bodies before they can practice in their field.³ Foreign trained professionals can only practice in their area of expertise if the assessing bodies are convinced they are qualified and competent.

Fact: 24% of all new permanent residents arriving in Grand Erie between 2007 and 2010 have a university degree and 16% have a trade certificate or college diploma.⁴

Fact: There are many foreign trained professionals who are successfully working in their field of expertise. It is estimated that more than 40% of immigrants to Canada are working in the profession for which they were trained.⁵

Fact: According to the Canadian Medical Association (CMA), more than 26% of all physicians practicing in Ontario in 2011 were foreign trained.⁶

“I'm very lucky...I was able to gain valuable experience in the Canadian workplace and made contacts who have helped me apply for jobs.”

Jia Durand, Student

AAD'S STORY

At age 30, the only thing that would take Aad Vermeyden away from Holland, his place of birth, would be an exciting career. With a four-year business management diploma along with a passion for the arts, Aad moved to England. Eight years later, an opportunity in Canada as coordinator of an international arts festival became available. Moving to North America was not something that Aad thought he would ever do. The family had already experienced how hard it was to start life in a new country and realized, "how difficult it would be to move countries once again." In 1997, after completing many forms and medical tests, Aad and his family came to Canada with the security of a permanent job offer.

Aad came to Canada to work, but the job that brought him here came to an abrupt end after only six months. An exciting career was no longer his main priority. With three young children, finding work and continuing to provide for his family became Aad's main focus. "The hiring and firing process in Canada is harsh. Being given just 2 weeks' notice is unheard of." He remembers this time in his life as one of the most difficult periods.

Aad believes that "being honest, showing integrity, being willing to face up to things when something is wrong and working hard," is what helped him re-establish his career. As President of Blueprint Agencies, a successful business in Paris, Ontario, Aad speaks of the enormous amount of opportunity in Canada, emphasizing that "you have to look for it, try things out – if it doesn't work, move on to the next thing."

Fourteen years later, Aad has done many things and contributed in many ways to his community. In looking back at his life Aad notes, "We have been so lucky. We made some extremely good friends. They became the people that have shaped our lives. This is very important when everyone else is still in Holland."

MYTH 2 Immigrants do not want to work

Fact: In 2006, 74.6% of all recent immigrants 15 years and older participated in the labour force. This is higher than the participation rate of the total population 15 years and older for Grand Erie (67.1%) and Ontario (67.1%).⁷

Fact: It is common in Canada for immigrant professionals such as doctors and engineers to be "underemployed" in jobs such as drivers, cleaners and security agents. These overqualified immigrants take these jobs because they want to work, not because they are suitable or fulfilling.

Fact: One of the reasons people immigrate is because they want a better life and a better future for their children. For most immigrants, a better life includes a suitable and fulfilling job. In Grand Erie, very few immigrants – less than 5% of the total case load – are on social assistance.⁸

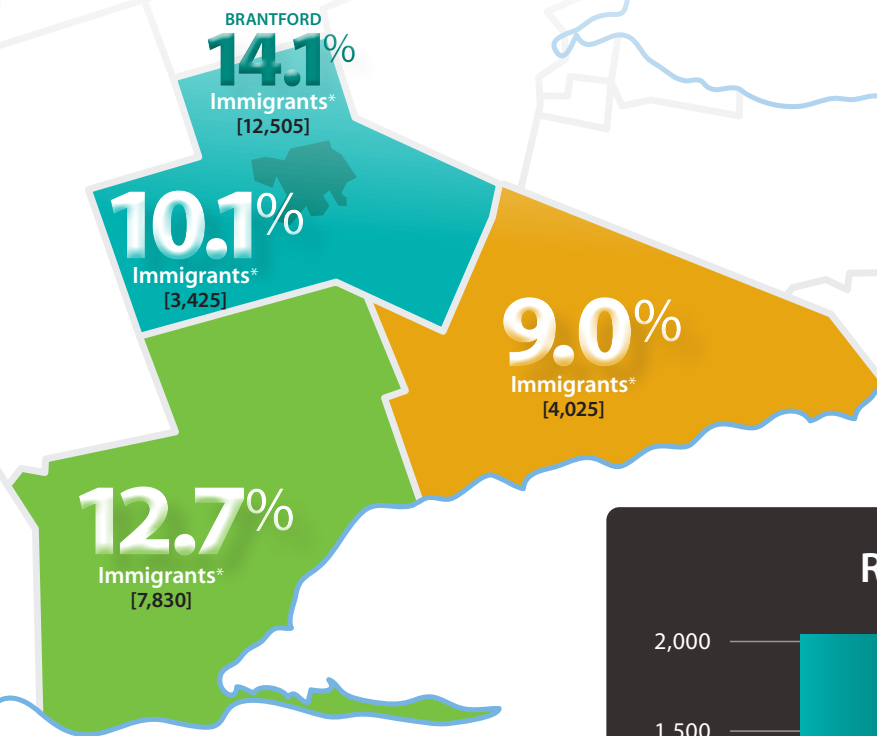
Fact: Immigrants who arrived in Canada during the 1990s made up almost 70% of the overall growth rate in the labour force during that period.⁹

“...you have to work for it, try things out – if it doesn't work, move on to the next thing.”

Aad Vermeyden, President Blueprint Agencies, Paris, Ontario

By 2031, roughly one in every three people in the labour force could be foreign born.¹¹ The presence of immigrants in Canada is not only a reflection of Canada's multicultural reality; it is also a necessity for economic growth.

Many of the immigrants who come to Grand Erie are highly skilled and educated; they are doctors, engineers, accountants, business professionals and trades people. They contribute to Grand Erie socially, culturally and economically.



Where is Grand Erie?

Grand Erie consists of four unique communities:

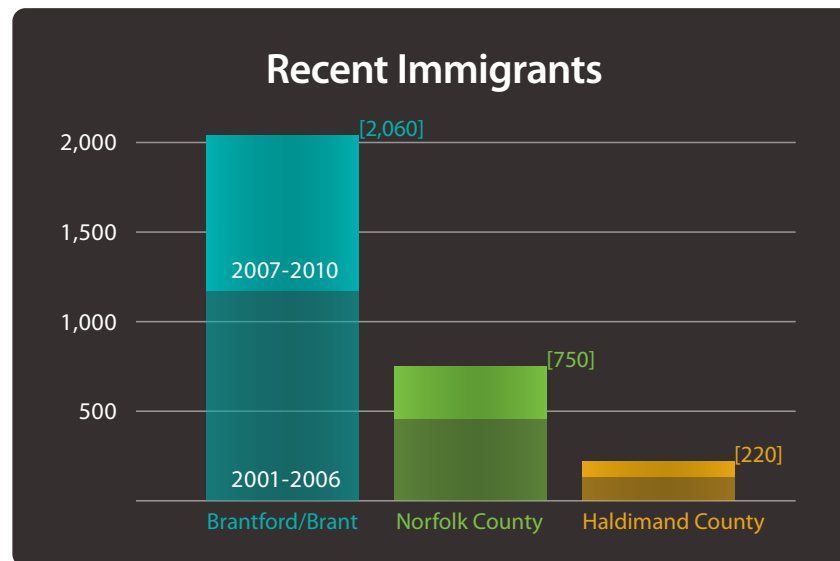
- City of Brantford — Population 88,845
- County of Brant — Population 33,980
- Norfolk County — Population 61,860
- Haldimand County — Population 44,705

MYTH 3 Immigrants are a burden on the Canadian economy

Fact: One third of all new permanent residents moving to Grand Erie are accepted into Canada under the skilled worker category.⁴ Immigrants are educated in diverse fields; bringing experience and languages from all over the world. They are an invaluable resource that will give Grand Erie an edge in a highly competitive global market.

Fact: Some immigrants come to Canada as entrepreneurs or business migrants. To qualify, they must prove that they have a minimum net worth of \$300,000.¹⁶ These immigrants establish businesses and create new jobs for Canadians. In 2010 alone, more than 13,000 business immigrants and their families became permanent residents in Canada.¹

Fact: Canada's immigration policies are designed to attract more skilled workers than any other class of immigrants – an effective tool for improving the Canadian economy.¹⁰



* Percentage of Total Population 2006

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census | Citizenship and Immigration Canada, RDM Facts and Figures 2010

NADEEM'S STORY

Nadeem Sharif is a gas station retailer. His three gas stations in Brantford employ 17 people. Arriving in Canada in 2001, he had no intention of becoming a business owner. With a Master's degree in Computer Sciences from Pakistan and four years of experience as Manager of Information Systems, he had hoped to work in his field. Nadeem reminisces about Pakistan by saying that even with a good job in Pakistan there was limited opportunity to make money – looking for a better life brought him to Canada. "Canada has a good image and good reputation. With some education and experience it was easy to enter. Possibly no other country would give me this opportunity."

With only one distant relative in Toronto, his future was uncertain. "Trying to get a professional job in my field during the recession hurt my return to my profession. My relative was in great need for someone to work in his grocery store." Nadeem describes how the transition from a management position in Pakistan to grocery store clerk was very hard for him to accept. His most significant challenge was "my brain not accepting the retail job...it was not easy to go from an office job to dealing with groceries and customers." In time, he recognized that his experience in the grocery store, is where he "learned everything about business." Accepting the need to consider a new direction in his career, Nadeem learned everything he could about the business.

When asked what advice he would offer newcomers, Nadeem suggests that internationally trained professionals coming to Canada are in a land of opportunity. He encourages newcomers to "be flexible with any of the fields you choose ...with a little bit of change in your profession, you can have many opportunities."

Nadeem views his greatest success as simply having been selected to come to Canada and "being in a nice country." He also speaks of success in terms of his family. "My wife and son came within one year of my arrival and I am now enjoying my life with my family."

MYTH 4 Immigrants take jobs away from Canadians

Fact: New immigrants are three times more likely than Canadian-born workers to be found in low-skilled jobs.¹² Between 1993 and 2001, it was found that immigrants who had been in Canada for 10 years or less had a higher rate of over-qualification than their Canadian-born counterparts.¹³ This may mean that immigrants are more likely to take jobs that individuals born in Canada with equivalent qualifications will not take.

Fact: Although many immigrants come to Canada as highly skilled professionals, their qualifications may not be recognized as equivalent to the qualifications of Canadian-born workers trained in the same fields. Such immigrants do not have the opportunity to compete for jobs with Canadians who have the same levels of qualification.¹³

Fact: The unemployment rate among recent immigrants in 2006 was 9.5%. This was 58% higher than the unemployment rate for non-immigrants in Grand Erie.¹³

“Be flexible with any of the fields you choose ...with a little bit of change in your profession, you can have many opportunities.”

MYTH 5 Immigrants don't know how to speak English or do not want to learn to speak English

Fact: 95% of recent arrivals in Grand Erie report they had knowledge of English.¹⁴

Fact: Six months after their arrival, 58% of immigrants reported that they were able to speak English well or very well. This percentage rose to 69% four years after their arrival.¹⁵

Fact: The employment rate of immigrants increases with their ability to speak English.¹⁵

Fact: Overall in Canada, immigrants who reported speaking English well or very well, compared to those who reported speaking it less well, are more likely to have an “appropriate” job.¹⁵

Top 3 Places of Birth

(Recent Immigrants 2007 to 2010)

	Haldimand	Norfolk	Brant/Brantford	Ontario
1	Europe	South & Central America	Asia & Pacific	Asia & Pacific
2	Asia & Pacific	Asia & Pacific	Europe	Africa & Middle East
3	South & Central America	Europe	South & Central America	Europe

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, RDM Facts and Figures 2010

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HOW CAN YOU HELP?

1. Help a newcomer feel at home within your community and organization.
2. Become a mentor to a newcomer.
3. Support cultural diversity in your workplace and community.
4. Provide or request workplace diversity and workshops in your workplace.
5. Spread awareness of the employment potential and qualifications of immigrants.
6. Learn more about the benefits of immigration and the assets that newcomers offer to the community.
7. Share a copy of this booklet with your friends and co-workers.



Grand Erie
Immigration
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OUR VISION

Vibrant, prosperous, welcoming communities.

For more information please contact us at 519-756-1116
or visit www.workforceplanningboard.org/immigration.