



The Challenge of Immigration

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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In 1891 my paternal grandfather immigrated to Canada from England. He was an eleven-year-old orphan who never saw his family again. I treasure the thirty pages that he wrote by hand documenting his life story. His words really pull at my heart strings. Grandpa wrote: "But talk about food, I had never seen so much. But talk about being lonesome, I had changed so many homes in such short a time I almost cried my heart out."

Imagine what it would be like if Canada wasn't a safe place to live and, suddenly you had to leave. You could only take what you could carry. There would be miles of walking ahead of you. No fancy hotel rooms or chefs' meals to make the trip easier. You might be sleeping outside with strangers with a limited amount of food to sustain you, never knowing if you would be able to again see the family and friends who you left behind.

It would take courage to sit in a refugee camp, hoping but never knowing, if another country would accept you. And then, when you are finally granted permission to face more challenges - a language and culture that you don't understand. What an adjustment!

Well, if you think about it, most of us are immigrants. Our ancestors, for whatever reason, decided that life would be better here than where they were at the time. They bravely set out leaving what they knew behind so that we can now call this country "home". I bet they had no idea how hard it would be!

I believe that Canada welcomes immigrants for three reasons:

1. We are compassionate people who want to help others because it is the right thing to do.
2. Our birth rate has decreased over the years and we need people to grow and prosper our vast lands.
3. Having a population made up of a mosaic of cultures makes life interesting and helps us to expand our mindset. We are challenged to learn from our differences.

This past week I was asked to speak to the staff at Saamis Immigration Services in our city. Because of our country's response to the Syrian crisis, referrals have more than tripled! In past years this organization would be there to help about three dozen immigrants. In the past two months, they have had over 118 immigrants arrive and there are more on the way!

I have the highest respect for this organization and others across Canada who are involved but wonder why there are so few hands to do the work. How can you help? Are you able to donate some items to facilitate setting up households from nothing? Could you invest an hour or two a week to help someone do their English homework or learn about our city and culture? What would you hope someone would do for your family if they were in such a vulnerable situation?

Remember, we are all in this together!

Perhaps you could just send a tray of baking for the staff to enjoy in the middle of their super busy day. Could you help with moving the office to its new location?

Even a few words of encouragement would likely go a long way for both immigrant and staff. It would only take a few minutes to write a note to those involved in the process. For

example, let Antonio Samayoa, the Manager at Saamis Immigration knows that you are willing to be part of his resource team (or just cheering everyone on from the sidelines)!