



Welcome to the second edition of the Vancouver Local Immigration Partnership Newsletter!

Did you know...

- Immigrants make up over 40% of the city's total population.
- In 2016 there were +30,000 non-permanent residents living in Vancouver – representing nearly 5% of the city's total population!



Tweet us @VancouverLIP_ with your #LIPReasonsWhy Local Immigration Partnerships are important!

What's New?

- March-April 2022 Recap
 - Council Meeting Update
 - Equity Talks Recap
 - Actively Recruiting!
 - Council Members
 - Members-at-Large
 - Introducing Newest Team Members
- Community Corner
- Upcoming Events

March-April Recap

Can you believe it's May already? These past few months have just flown by! Since our last newsletter at the end of February a lot has transpired in the VLIP-sphere.

Equity Talks Summary

On Tuesday, March 29, 2022, Vancouver Local Immigration Partnership, in collaboration with the Province of BC and City of Vancouver, hosted *Equity Talks: Reimagining an Equitable Future*.

This information-packed, 90-minute session featured guest speakers from the provincial and municipal levels to talk about what they are doing within their organizations, at all levels, to promote equity, anti-racism, and reconciliation into their practices as systems of power and governing bodies.

After presentations from Lily Grewal (Province of BC), as well as Wilma Clark, Dr. Mumbi Maina and Nadia Carvalho (City of Vancouver), the group broke off into smaller groups to discuss key questions in our pursuit of an equitable future for Vancouver:

- *What does equity truly mean to you?*
- *Who risks exclusion in Vancouver?*
- *What can VLIP do to incorporate the viewpoints and perspectives of the groups?*

Due to a limited amount of time, one of the key takeaways of this free, public event is that folks want to have more time to discuss the questions. Many attendees expressed wishing a 2-hour session could be dedicated to discussing topics like the ones we broached on this day. With that feedback in mind, we have something up our sleeves. Keep your eyes peeled for the next edition of Equity Talks later this year.

From the Roundtable Session



Council Meeting Recap

Our last council meeting was April 14, 2022, and we were joined by one of our strategic planners, Dorla, from Vantage Point, who kindly walked us through the next steps for the Vancouver Local Immigration Partnership strategic planning.

Before Dorla's presentation, we also reviewed some organizational updates, such as the new positions in VLIP: Members-at-Large and Storytelling Consulting Committee (see descriptions in next section below!)

Dorla left us with some questions to reflect upon for our session-ending Jamboard.

- Are we missing stakeholder groups who could contribute to this high-level planning conversation?
- Are there any other key individuals who are valuable partners for VLIP who may be open to an interview?
- Any other thoughts or reflections on the process?

If you are interested in learning more about what we do at VLIP council meetings in-depth, and/or giving input to the above questions, make sure you sign up for a membership (you can do that [here](#)). We send out detailed meeting minutes to all council members 😊

Actively Recruiting

- Council Members
- Members-at-Large
- Storytelling Consulting Committee

Council Members

If you're new here and haven't heard... We're looking for organizations based in Vancouver that have an active interest in supporting newcomers, whether they be refugees, immigrants, migrants, temporary foreign workers and/or international students - if your organization supports these groups of people, and you take steps to support equity in Vancouver's policies and processes, we want you to be part of our council!

Know someone who might be a good fit? Direct them to our membership application page, [here](#).

Members-at-Large

Past and present council members, we asked for your feedback, and you delivered!

This year we are launching an entirely new part of the VLIP Council: Members-at-Large. This new sub-section of the council was launched as a part of actionable feedback from the previous rendition of the VLIP Council. This is an opportunity for individual members with expertise and knowledge in specific areas to provide guidance and input to the Vancouver Local Immigration Partnership strategically.

Storytelling Consulting Committee

The VLIP Storytelling Committee will work together to represent VLIP appropriately in the media. This group is made up of members of the VLIP Council, along with VLIP Co-Managers, Koyali and Nova, Storyteller, Deanna, and Communications Coordinator, Adamandia.

Introducing the Newest VLIP Team Members:

- Sara
- Deanna
- Adamandia

Sara Nezaki

Sara Nezaki is an international student at Langara College. She has a Bachelor of Law and previously worked at a bank in Japan. When coming to Canada in 2019, she was going to study English and go back to Japan after a year, but the multicultural nature of Canadian society encouraged her to pursue permanent residency instead. Her immigration pathway has been full of excitement but also challenges. She is excited to share her lived experience as the Immigrant Advisory Table member.

Deanna Cheng

Deanna Cheng is a first-generation-born [cis-het](#) Chinese Canadian and she's a freelance journalist who is often trying to figure out the power gaps between her and the next person. Navigating the [white normative Canadian media landscape](#) since she graduated from journalism school in 2015, she has developed some [trauma-informed practices](#) within her work and continues to evolve as she listens more. For VLIP, her writing focus will be on stories about immigration integration, issues and solutions. She looks forward to including more [intersectional representation](#) when talking to people and working with the VLIP team.

Adamandia Coumbos

Adamandia has been working in marketing and communications for small businesses for the past 8 years. She has worked primarily with technology companies, and specialized, for a time, in large-scale event coordination (pre-pandemic, of course), before making the switch to supporting non-profits in Vancouver. In her earlier life, she went to BCIT for Broadcast Journalism, and is a huge fan of trauma-informed reporting. She is looking forward to the projects ahead with Deanna, Sara, and the VLIP team.

You will see Sara, Deanna and Adamandia in and out of VLIP meetings and events and on committees such as the Storytelling Consulting Committee. Don't be shy! Make sure you say hi!



Community Corner

Introducing the newest section of our newsletter – VLIP Community Corner!

VLIP members come from a variety of industries and backgrounds. Neighbourhood houses, non-profits, healthcare providers, small businesses, and more, all band together under the VLIP banner to make our community a better place. We have some great member organizations that help create the VLIP Community.

Check out all the noteworthy things happening in our VLIP Community.

Tayybeh Foods

VLIP member, [Tayybeh Foods](#), is committed to creating and maintaining a sustainable business by committing to waste-free packaging.

As a small business in the food industry, learning how to reduce their carbon footprint is at the core of their efforts to be more sustainable. One of the ways they have committed to this value is by using eco-friendly packaging for all their food containers.

And, that's not all Tayybeh Foods does to reduce their carbon footprint! They proudly source everything they can right here in British Columbia.

[“For example, most of \[their\] meat is sourced from local BC growers and is certified Halal”](#). The fresh fruits and veggies they use come from local BC growers too!

Check out all the ways Tayybeh is working towards a more sustainable future on their [blog](#).

About Tayybeh Foods:

Tayybeh, named after the Arabic word meaning both “kind” and “delicious” is a unique social enterprise and food venture. What began as an initiative that organized ticketed pop-up Syrian dinners across the Lower Mainland with proceeds supporting newcomer Syrian women chefs has since grown to one of Vancouver's most sought-after catering and meal services.

Upcoming Events

Asian Heritage Month

May is Asian Heritage Month in Canada.

We celebrate Asian Heritage month because it is important to reflect on the contributions of Canadians of Asian heritage throughout our history - without Asian-Canadians, we would not have Canada the country as we know it today.

[The theme for Asian Heritage Month 2022 is “Continuing a legacy of greatness”. This month is a reminder for all Canadians to come together to combat anti-Asian racism and discrimination in all its forms.](#)

This Asian Heritage Month, we sat down with one of our Immigrant Advisory Table members, Ruchi Lall, originally from India, to talk about her experiences as a South Asian in Vancouver, what her heritage means to her, and how her heritage has shaped the individual she is today.

Ruchi, how did you find your way to Vancouver?

We applied for express entry for immigration to Canada from India. We landed here October 13, 2017.

I understood the profession of social workers was important in BC and there was a shortage of social workers here. And that's why I was accepted as a primary applicant.

We came here to see a new life.

How has your heritage shaped the person you are today?

A lot! I'm Hindu by origin. I'm more spiritually inclined rather than religious, so, I have a spiritual guru. My whole values, and how I approach life, people – it's all because of my culture.

You see, there is a lot of difference here in Canadian values and our values, which are both good and bad.

It is a standard thing us to take care of our seniors, our parents; there is no requirement for a senior home in India, per se, which is the norm here. In Canada, you see a lot of seniors here staying alone.

The first place I was living in Canada, I used to see a Chinese gentleman, quite elderly, and he used to walk every day very slowly for his exercises. I used to say to him, why do you stay alone? You don't have kids or family?

And he said, “My wife died. My kids stay very far. I live on my own.”

So I used to share some Indian meals with him and we shared some nice moments – I could tell he was happy.

But in India, we don't require that, it's a standard. It's a part of our life, our culture, and values, which I really feel is very important.

Does your family have any traditions that are especially important to you?

We have a Hindu temple here we go there frequently. I have my spiritual guru's temple here; we make it a point to go once a month so that our child understands those values and continues it

Diwali is a very important festival for us. We still follow those.

The respect we give to our elders is very important too. We take blessings by touching their feet on all special occasions.

Donating/giving is an important part of our culture where kids learn to share and be grateful for what we have.

We still follow the elaborate marriage rituals which lasts for many days.

And clothes, traditional clothes, we still wear them.

What brings you joy about your heritage and culture?

I enjoy everything about my culture. It's very welcoming. There are no formalities.

In India, whenever we wanted, we could just drop by our family and friends place, and say “hi, hello, this is what we've got, let's have a potluck,” and stuff like that.

Here, it's a little more formal.

Family is a huge part of my culture. [In western culture] it is very limited to your spouse and your kids. To me, family is much broader. My sister's kids are my children as much as my own children. We support our kids for a long time, at least till they are married and often beyond that where the whole family lives together and supports each other – the joint family system in India is very common.

What challenges that you have faced as an Immigrant of Asian Heritage in Vancouver?

Unfortunately, even though I was selected and accepted because of my professional qualifications, the first response I got was that I don't have sufficient experience in Canada and that's why I wouldn't get a front-end social worker role at all.

I was able to get my license as a social worker, so I'm a Registered Social Worker here. But I accepted the fate that despite being qualified I probably wouldn't be getting front line social worker roles.

But I still wanted to remain in my [industry], so I accepted my first job as a grant-writer with a non-profit and was there for two years.

My husband is also a qualified professional, and he has been facing similar challenges.

It is weird that we are accepted for our qualifications to come to a new country, but then we are told we don't have enough experience here, so we won't be getting front-end jobs. It's quite a challenge in terms of getting jobs, even settling down.

In my journey, my son also had a lot of issues settling down being from a different country.

Kids can be bullies. He faced a lot of challenges in his first school. He was bullied quite a bit. So, I had to change his first school and move to another school because I realized the principal of the school was not supportive, and wasn't reacting well to his bullying, in fact was blaming him.

There was a group of 5-6 boys who were trying to bully him. He picked up a stone. He didn't do anything, he just picked up a stone. But the kids complained to the school and so the principal called me and said "your child is very aggressive and he needs to be dealt with."

And I was trying to understand what happened and why it happened. She didn't mention about the five kids who were trying to bully one single child.

And she says, "if he wants to participate in any sports activities, I want you to come, and only then I can ensure he can join because I cannot trust his response."

I was like, "okay, I don't mind coming, provided you ensure the other five kid's parents also come because I can't trust their reactions."

The principal did not agree.

But my son so badly wanted to participate in the sports activity that I did join. I did not want to disappoint him. But these are the kinds of reactions that my son used to get.

We are trying to also adjust in our lives. There are a lot of adjustments as an immigrant.

I am fortunate despite all these challenges to find a few mentors throughout my career. They have helped me throughout, though I did also face certain weird comments on whatever I did. When I was grant-writer, I faced some challenges with some of the donors.

I remember one of the donors, who had never even met me, or seen me, or even spoken to me – I'd written him a letter requesting funds, a general trend that we write. And I accidentally mentioned his organization – instead of a Trust, I called his organization a non-profit.

He was furious. He called me because my name did not sound Canadian. He said he was sure I was not from Canada.

He blasted me as to how ill-mannered and how ill-qualified I was, even without listening to anything. I was struggling to understand what the issue was as the only mistake I had done was, instead of "trust" I mentioned a charitable organization.

And he asked me, "You do not seem to be a Canadian."

And I said, "No, I'm from India."

He said, "How can you people land here."

And then he made a lot of racist comments.

Issues like that come up sometimes and used to cause a lot of turbulence in my mind. There's a lack of confidence, and it still sometimes comes up. I do face challenges even now appearing in front of a large group, because of all these incidences...

Even when I was hired into my current position, when someone I knew heard about it, they gave me the comment, "I guess you got the job as your employer is hiring a lot of racial minorities to show their representation, so you have been selected". Not because I was qualified. And it was kind of sad that I had to hear such comments, but fortunately my team here is very supportive and values me for the diversity I bring in the discussions and thought process.

But otherwise, I have a lot of good people who have been very supportive. Some of them are Canadians and have helped me. I believe every country has good and bad. I just hope the bad is because of other situations and not because of racism. That's my only hope.

How do you see those barriers being addressed?

For the school, the parent of another child [of South Asian heritage], who was also being bullied apart from my son, was very active with the school, and with the parent committee, and she took this matter up.

I guess the principal is no longer working at that school. I don't know which school she has gone to, but I feel sorry for that other school.

What does Asian Heritage Month mean to you?

Any heritage month, whether it be Asian or otherwise, is an opportunity to showcase your culture and share with the other members of community your heritage and culture.

Narrate to us, narrate to the kids even, especially the next generation, as they need to learn and remember their culture; an opportunity to share our stories, what our gods meant for us, what each festival meant for us, what is the food and the cuisines that we eat, and also an opportunity to learn from others about their experience. And it's also an important opportunity to break the stereotypes, and if we continue this, it should help us even further.

What message would you like to give to newcomer Asians?

The message is don't lose hope.

- Stay strong on your values.
- Adapt but learn from the new environment and culture you are living in.
- Be ready to be flexible and meet wonderful people.
- Don't lose patience!
- Stick to your guns.

And don't feel let down when people say you need to start from scratch! Build your network and share your transferable skills with them.

Thank you for taking the time to share your story with us, Ruchi. Your knowledge and experiences will make us a stronger partnership.

