

# Minority Report

New to Canada? Here's to how get ahead. By Susan Johnston

BEING AN IMMIGRANT IS HARDSHIP ENOUGH — but being a student immigrant can be worse. Challenges can range from cultural differences to English-language difficulties, and these traits can be carried into the workforce. Minorities entering Canada's labour force also seem harder hit by layoffs and downsizing.

Recruiters say there's still demand for diverse workers in several industries. For instance, the health care and technology sectors employ thousands of recent immigrants.

Employers want the best, and if your English isn't up to par you won't be first choice. Wage inequities and lower employment standards make it harder to find the perfect career. If English is your main problem, try group ESL classes or private tutoring.

Loan programs can help. Maytree-Alternativa Savings Immigrant Employment Loan Program offers loans up to \$5,000 for new immigrants, to cover the cost of training programs leading to employment.

If you're newly arrived, consider kick-starting your career as a bank teller in a cultural community that works in your favour. You will be able to converse better as a bilingual representative.

Immigrants will account for 100% of the labour-force market growth by 2011. You are definitely important to Canada.

Clint Cora (ClintCora.com), an author and diversity speaker in Ontario, worked in Canada's pharmaceutical industry for 14 years and has noticed a move toward diversity. "Every company has a more diverse structure," he says.

He notes, "While many minorities get hired into technical fields like medicine and engineering, they aren't often promoted to management".

"I'm one of the few" explains Cora, originally from Asia. "Companies look for people with social skills who can integrate across barriers."

His advice? "If you're a visible minority, try not to stay within your own culture. The more

people you can relate to, the more successful you will be."

Familiarize yourself with the Canadian education system. Colleges and universities offer excellent co-ops and benefits to minorities. Scholarships can help cover costs.

Not every aspect of being a student immigrant is negative. The benefits you reap will be substantial. You may not speak English perfectly, but you have 100% proficiency in Arabic, Chinese, Tamil or Hungarian. Canada is a multicultural nation. The key is to apply your skills to any industry.

## DID YA KNOW?

✓ Canada's Employment Equity Act applies to federally regulated industries such as banks, airlines and telecommunication companies. It protects four groups: women, people with disabilities, Aboriginal people and visible minorities (non-white, non-Aboriginal people).

✓ As of July 2008, visible minorities made up about 15% of Canada's total labour force. By 2017, they will make up one in five people in Canada's available workforce.

[Source: Goliath, The Gale Group.]

✓ Canada's largest visible minority groups are South Asian and Chinese, followed by African-Canadian and Filipino.

To get ahead, it doesn't matter what field you get into, the TOP PEOPLE IN EACH FIELD ARE NOT NECESSARILY THE BEST IN TECHNICAL SKILLS. They also have great people skills."

—Clint Cora

## RESOURCES FOR IMMIGRANTS & MINORITY WORKERS

• Association for New Canadians Mentoring Program, anc-nf.cc

• Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program, hrsdc.gc.ca

• CareerBridge.ca

• DIVERSEcity, dcrs.ca

• Diversity Careers diversitycareers.ca

• Eluta.ca's Database of Canada's Best Diversity Employers

• LanguageSchoolFinder.com

• StudyInCanada.com

• Scholarships-Bourses-ca.org

• ScholarshipsCanada.com

career fair scholarship  
health care  
cultural awareness proactive  
**inclusiveness**  
diversity equality respect  
five-year plan  
communication skills technology  
hidden job market  
people skills