

Lost Luggage

By Tamanna Dipu
August 2017

‘OMG! I lost my luggage’ was my panicked shout to my husband 4 years ago when we arrived in Toronto. We were at Pearson Airport just about to get into our friend’s car to drive to our newly rented home.

Immigrating to a new country is always stressful and it is even more stressful when leaving behind a well-paid job, parents, friends, relatives and an accomplished life. My stress level was already at 10 out of 10, just being an immigrant thinking about the fear of an unforeseen future in Canada. When we landed at the airport, my stress paralyzed my eyesight, my thought process and as I got into the car, I realized I had left my luggage in the airport passenger lounge.

One of the best things about Canada is that it is a country that embraces diversity. Settling into a new home takes time but overall it went very well for the first few months. We had a new home, new friends, and a new community. Most of all, our children were making new friends and enjoying their school. But the goal of finding a career was not going as smoothly as I had hoped. I ended up finding a job at a restaurant for an overnight shift. It was a survival job but I kept my hopes high by researching how to return to my original occupation as a Social Worker.

There is no doubt that “job research” is overwhelming. The data and information available on websites did not make sense to me and some of it made me feel that I would never be able to get back to my career.

Suddenly I was the person who needed encouragement instead of the other way round! I told myself “I can do this” and used the skills I had developed in my home

country along with a new term I kept running across on websites: conduct an information interview. I realized that I desperately needed someone to explain the role of a Social Worker in Canada, and how to get the certification I needed in order to return to this occupation.

Luckily I was able to find a wonderful person who was working in the Toronto social services sector who gave me inspiration and information. She let me conduct an information interview with her for 20 minutes. Those 20 minutes were like a lighthouse beacon that helped me regain my confidence and career route again.

I discovered that I actually had a very career-focused plan, and I was able to pursue the path I wanted starting by returning to college and obtaining a placement that eventually connected me with the job I have now as a Resource and Information Specialist with the Centre for Education and Training (www.tcet.com)

One of the most fulfilling parts of my job is that I get to provide easy-to-understand labour market information to job seekers. Almost every day, I help people to understand the career trends that not that long ago, I thought was a complicated list of fearful online data.

Some of the job seekers I help are new immigrants, some are new college and university graduates, and some are people over the age of 45 seeking a career change. Whoever they are, I help to provide hopefulness, which is what initially motivated me to work in social services.

Within 5 years of arriving at Pearson Airport, I have been able to return to a new version of my career. Within 5 minutes of realizing I had lost my luggage on my first day in Canada, I was able to find it!