



BC Refugee Hub Urges Highlighting of #RefugeeSuccessStories to Change Narrative in Face of Growing Global Displacement

In advance of World Refugee Day on June 20, BC Refugee Hub shares stories of visionary, successful newcomers to BC, shattering misconceptions about this growing group of our province's population.

British Columbia—Consider the increased number of refugees seeking home in recent years and the first word to come to mind may not be “success.” But prosperity and hope is exactly what BC Refugee Hub—an online resource hub funded by the Province of BC and administered by ISSo/BC—is looking to underline with their new social campaign, #refugeesuccessstory.

Unprecedented levels of global displacement—68.5 million annually—continue. As more refugees settle in British Columbia, thanks to Canada’s response to this humanitarian crisis, #refugeesuccessstory works to dispel misperceptions about newcomers. By profiling individuals creating success for their neighbourhoods and BC’s economy, BC Refugee Hub hopes to demonstrate refugees’ contribution to the economy and our communities.

“Forcible displacement continues to increase in the face of deepening conflicts and increased insecurity around the world. There’s never been a more pressing time to rethink how we perceive refugees in BC—as the resilient, visionary and community-driven individuals they are. #RefugeeSuccessStory celebrates just some of the thousands of newcomers now contributing to our province,” explained Bahar Taheri, Project Consultant with BC Refugee Hub.

Research reflects this. ISSo/BC’s “Refugee Claimants in BC” report¹ demonstrates that 72 percent of claimants had pursued education beyond high school; 61 percent had university or graduate degrees. 76 percent report having intermediate or advanced English.

After up to 8 years of residence², more newcomers own businesses than Canadian-born residents—contributing thousands of jobs, and millions of dollars, to the economy every year. Moreover, in just over 20 years the average newcomer pays back all assistance and makes net contributions³, while their children are among the largest net contributors to the country’s wealth⁴. As Vancity reported⁵,

¹ https://issbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Refugee_Claimants_in_BC-2018.pdf

² <http://www.bridgesnotborders.ca/myths-and-facts-10.html>

³ <http://www.bridgesnotborders.ca/myths-and-facts-10.html>

⁴ <http://www.bridgesnotborders.ca/myths-and-facts-10.html>

⁵ <https://www.vancity.com/AboutVancity/News/MediaReleases/RefugeesBoostLocalEconomy-Dec2-15/Conflict-to-communities-Syrian-Refugee-Report.pdf>

the 2,500 refugees who arrived in BC in 2016 will contribute an estimated minimum of \$563 million in local economic activity in the next 20 years.

Some of the young people sharing their #refugeesuccessstories this June include:

Munifa Ahmed (24) moved to Canada in February 2017, from Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia. Now, based in Surrey, she works as a Data Analyst and Marketer, and is founder of the SmartMeat app—a tool that supports climate action by tracking carbon produced by meat production. She is deeply passionate about climate change and climate migration, volunteering with Beyond Borders amongst other groups.

Dacious Richardson (21) is a student in Sports Science and Coaching at Douglas College who, since moving to Canada from Liberia, has committed to transforming his community of Surrey through a range of volunteer positions that support other young people, including as an outreach youth worker with Yo Bro | Yo Girl, an external branch communicator with Canadian Council for Refugees Youth Network and a mentor in Surrey and Delta schools. Such initiatives earned a nomination for a BC Multiculturalism Award in 2019.

Hassan Al Kontar (37) from Dama, Syria, became the centre of a global media firestorm in 2019 when he was stranded in Kuala Lumpur airport for more than seven months followed by two months in a Malaysian detention centre. Now relocated in Canada, he is currently an active community advocate, increasing awareness about refugees in Vancouver.

BC Refugee Hub will share these stories, and others, through their own social networks and those of supportive organizations, and encourages BC residents to celebrate newcomers who are immersing themselves in BC life and transforming their communities for the better as a result.

Those participating in the campaign can use #refugeesuccessstory or find @bcrefugeehub to join the conversation.

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BC Refugee Hub

The BC Refugee Hub serves as a resource centre, providing access to the latest publications and relevant statistics on all refugees throughout the entirety of BC. The organization was founded in partnership with ISSo/BC and the Provincial Government of British Columbia. Established in 2015 to support BC's share of the 25,000 Syrian refugees who resettled in Canada in 2016, the hub has now been extended to include information and support for all refugees throughout the process.

**For further information,
and to arrange an interview with BAHAR TEHARI of BC Refugee Hub
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