

**A Piece of Poland in South Okanagan:**  
**Immigrant entrepreneurs create a successful business in the valley**  
*By Elmira Galiyeva, SOS Local Immigration Partnership*



Vlodik Hryniewicz lived in Gdansk – a colourful port city on the Baltic coast of Poland. He has been a member of the National Kayak and Canoe Team of Poland for over ten years. He participated in University Games and World Championships. Vlodik enjoyed his sports career for a while but, at a certain point, while his country was still under the communist regime, he decided to leave Poland.

After spending a year and a half in Germany, he came to Canada. His journey in Canada started in Ontario. He lived in Thunder Bay, explored London and Toronto where he worked in the food industry for seven years. Life was busy and exciting. At some point he “adopted” his new name – Walter, since his original one was difficult to pronounce for many people.

One day Walter received a call from his relatives in Thunder Bay – there was a tragedy in the family and Walter went to support his relatives. His wife, Alicja, joined him later. They decided to stay in Thunder Bay and got involved in running a large restaurant. Once they realized that this partnership was not working well, they committed to starting their own business – a restaurant offering classic Polish cuisine. In 2013 “Polish Bistro” opened its doors on a busy street and welcomed local foodies.

After a few thriving years, Walter and Alicja were on the road again. They were looking for a milder climate and South Okanagan was a natural choice. They came to the region three times to check the options for opening a restaurant before the final move to Penticton. They found a good spot downtown. Alicja put her heart into making it cozy and truly authentic. "Poland is a beautiful country, rich in history, arts and culture. We are Polish, so we try to showcase our country and culinary traditions", explains Walter. On July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 the food lovers of the South Okanagan received a new treat – "Polish Bistro".

The Bistro at 65 Nanaimo Street offers a number of hearty, home style dishes – six types of pierogies (my favourite is made with spinach, tomato and feta), cabbage rolls, meatballs, Polish sausages, chicken breast wrapped in bacon and schnitzel, and, of course, the king of soups – Borsch!

The South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS) team often have lunch at the Bistro and, recently, ordered some pierogies for the Business After Business event, which were very highly rated by the local business community. You are probably already on your way to the Bistro.... Smacznego! Enjoy your meal!