

“My Dream is to build a Successful Business in my Community”

By Elmira Galiyeva, SOS Local Immigration Partnership



From left to right Nesreen Nehme, Eklas Alzoubi, Walida Jamil

Immigration is not easy. If you experienced it, you know what I mean. If not, imagine moving to a country where you don't know anyone, you don't speak the local language, you don't have a home, and you don't have a job. How would that go?

Studies show that it may take up to 15 years for a newcomer to integrate into a community in Canada. Daunting, isn't it? There is something each of us can do to change that, though. From welcoming policies at the government level and supportive practices at the organizational level, to a caring attitude of a neighbor or a colleague who doesn't just tolerate you but is genuinely interested in and values you.

Let me introduce you to two wonderful women on their settlement journey.

Meet Walida Jamlil. Walida, her husband Ahmed and their three children moved to Canada thanks to a group of residents at St Saviour's Church that sponsored them in 2016. Originally from Syria, they lived in Lebanon before coming to Penticton. Ahmed was a construction worker and Walinda was a stay-at-home mom. Walinda admits that language learning plays the most important role on the way to integration. Both, Walida and Ahmed, are learning English at the South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS). Ahmed works at a store and

Walida has started home-based businesses – ***Walida’s Mending & Alteration Services and Walida’s Catering Services***. Ahmed is very supportive of Walida’s entrepreneurship.

“I really like it here”, says Walinda, “I enjoy the English lessons... people are very nice...the church group has been very kind and supportive...children are happy – they love their school and made friends...”

“What is your dream, Walida?” I ask. She smiles, “My dream is to build a successful business in my community”.

Meet my next champion- Eklas Alzoubi. Eklas and her family (husband Mohammad and three children at that time) also arrived in 2016 thanks to the sponsorship of the local group of residents – Summerland Refugee Sponsorship Group. Now the Alzoubi family has five children. They live in Summerland.

Mohammad, who used to be a chef in Syria, works at the Lakeside Resort at the reception. The kids like learning languages and enjoy their school a lot. And Eklas studies English at SOICS and runs her **home-based catering business**. She got her driver’s license and is able to commute to Penticton every day. She admits with excitement in her eyes, “I can go anywhere I want”.

“I love cooking, especially when I see how much people enjoy the food I make. I sell my food at the local community markets and do catering as well. My dream is to open a restaurant and run it together with my husband and children. Right now we can’t afford the loans but someday, I hope, our dream will come true.”