

Academic Matters

Spring 2024

OCUFA'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LA REVUE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR DE L'OCUFA

International Education: Histories and Futures

**An interview with
Roopa Desai Trilokekar**
Changing perceptions of
international education in Canada

Soma Chatterjee
International students in Canada:
A lesson from history

**Josia Prince and
Benjamin Maiangwa**
The international student crisis
in Canada: A Northern perspective

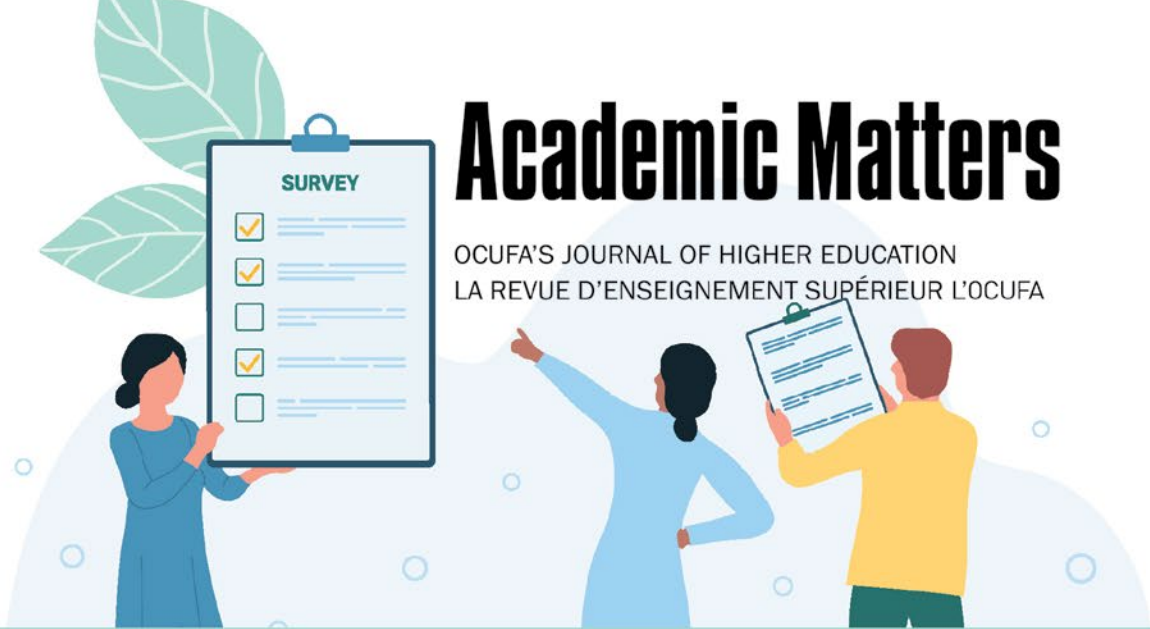
Anukriti Randev and Kriti Sharma
Migration for education or
education for migration?

Sarah A Gagliano Taliun
An early-career researcher's
lessons learned



Academic Matters

OCUFA'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LA REVUE D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR L'OCUFA



YOUR OPINION MATTERS

2024 READER SURVEY

Take a few minutes to help us create an even better magazine.

You could **WIN 1 OF 2 \$50 GIFT CARDS** to
aanin retail inc., an Indigenous owned department store.

Go to www.academicmatters.ca to have your say



2 Editorial Matters Manisha Aggarwal-Schifellite

3 Changing perceptions of international education in Canada An interview with Roopa Desai Trilokekar

The stories of international students and the policies that brought them to Canada are headline news. But international education wasn't always at the forefront of Canada's reputation abroad. Roopa Desai Trilokekar, a scholar of international education, explains the shifts.

6 International students in Canada: A lesson from history Soma Chatterjee

As international students become an integral part of the Canadian postsecondary education landscape, Soma Chatterjee asks: How did immigration, labour markets, and education get tied together, and how can we untangle their influence to improve student conditions?

10 The international student crisis in Canada: A Northern perspective Josia Prince and Benjamin Maingwa

From Thunder Bay, Ontario, Josia Price and Benjamin Maingwa explore the educational, financial, and cultural challenges that international students face in Northern Ontario, and the solutions that could improve their experiences.

15 Migration for education or education for migration? Anukriti Randev and Kriti Sharma

As graduate students, Anukriti Randev and Kriti Sharma set out to learn how and why students from the Punjab region of India come to Canada—and the myths and realities they encounter along the way.

20 An early-career researcher's five lessons learned from a tandem bike ride Sarah A Gagliano Taliun

In a new feature, *The Life Academic*, contributors reflect on how life and work intersect for faculty, academic librarians, academic professionals, researchers, and more. In the first installment, Sarah A Gagliano Taliun, a researcher and assistant professor at the Université de Montréal, offers advice for early-career researchers trying to find balance.

MORE ON ACADEMICMATTERS.CA

This journal is produced in the Dish With One Spoon Territory, which extends from the Great Lakes to Quebec and from Lake Simcoe into the United States. The territory exists as the result of a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas, and Haudenosaunee that bound them to protect and share the land and creatures within it. Subsequent Indigenous nations and peoples, Europeans, and all newcomers have been invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect. It is in this spirit that each issue of Academic Matters is produced.

This journal is printed with union labour, on sustainably sourced paper, and with vegetable-based ink.

OCUFA

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des associations des professeurs des universités de l'Ontario

Academic Matters

OCUFA'S JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LA REVUE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR DE L'OCUFA

Academic Matters is published two times a year by OCUFA, and is received by 19,000 professors, academic librarians, and others interested in higher education issues across Canada. The journal explores issues of relevance to higher education in Ontario, other provinces in Canada, and globally. It is intended to be a forum for thoughtful, thought-provoking, original, and engaging discussion of current trends in postsecondary education and consideration of academia's future direction.

Readers are encouraged to contribute their views, ideas, and talents. Letters to the editor (maximum 250 words) are welcome and may be edited for length. To provide an article or artwork for Academic Matters, please send your query to Editor-in-Chief Manisha Aggarwal-Schifellite at editor@academicmatters.ca.

Reproduction of articles requires the permission of the author and publisher. Copyright in material accepted for publication remains with the author. The publisher may choose, however, to translate and/or reproduce material in print and electronic form. All published material expresses the view of the author(s) and not the publisher.

Academic Matters accepte volontiers des articles écrits en anglais ou en français.

Publisher:
OCUFA; Jenny Ahn, Executive Director

Editor-in-Chief:
Manisha Aggarwal-Schifellite

Associate Editors:
Rose Da Costa, Jordyn Perreault-Laird, Michael Savage,
Aparna Sundar

Art Direction:
Eva Kiss, Neglia Design Inc., www.NegliaDesign.com

Editorial Advisory Board:
Soma Chatterjee, Nana aba Duncan, Glen Jones, April Lindgren

National Advertising Sales:
Dovetail Communications
30 East Beaver Creek Road, Ste. 202
Richmond Hill, ON L4B 1J2

Sales Manager:
Marlene Mignardi, mmignardi@dvetail.com
(905) 707-3526

ISSN 1719-010X

For subscription information, please contact:
OCUFA@ocufa.on.ca

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:
Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
21 Randolph Ave, 4th Floor, Toronto, ON M6P 4G4

Phone (416) 979-2117 | Fax (416) 593-5607
www.ocufa.on.ca | www.academicmatters.ca

CUPE/Local 1281

union
logo
here

FSC
logo here

Cover illustration: Marie-Claude Carignan



International education is at a crossroads

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS in

Canada have found themselves at the centre of many political and cultural arguments over the past few years. It's easy to assume what their stories are, how they feel, and what they want from a Canadian educational experience. It's more difficult to dig deeper and discover what's going on under the surface. As the experts in this issue will show, it's imperative to examine the systems that brought us here in order to understand the impact of this current moment and how to build a better future for students, faculty, and staff at our universities.

In this issue, we hope to do just that. To unpack the current landscape of international education in a globalized university system, we've brought together experts on international education, scholars of migration and conflict, and international students themselves. In their pieces, they shed light on the complexities of Canada's involvement with international education over the past half-century. We're also asking: what can and should Canadian politicians, universities, and community members do to ensure a brighter future for this system?

In each of the stories featured in this issue, the authors ask us to reexamine what we think we know about education, work, immigration,

and community engagement. They also ask us to keep our eyes open to the systemic forces that brought us to this point. Finally, they ask us to look for equitable and fair solutions for improving teaching, learning, and research at our universities in this current internationalized context.

Roopa Desai Trilokekar, a career scholar of international education, explains the shifts in federal policy that brought us to this point and reflects on her career studying international education in an interview.

As international students become an integral part of the Canadian postsecondary education landscape, Soma Chatterjee, a professor with expertise on international education and migration asks: How did immigration, labour markets, and education get tied together, and how can we untangle their influence to improve student conditions?

From Thunder Bay, Ontario, undergraduate student Josia Price and Professor Benjamin Maiangwa at Lakehead University explore the educational, financial, and cultural challenges that international students face in Northern Ontario, and the solutions that could improve their experiences.

Anukriti Randev and Kriti Sharma reflect on research they did in

graduate school to learn how and why students from the Punjab region of India are coming to Canada—and the myths and realities they encounter along the way. They also explore their own stories of moving to Canada to pursue higher education and what they learned about these systems.

Finally, in a new feature, *The Life Academic*, contributors reflect on how life and work intersect for faculty, academic librarians, academic professionals, researchers, and more. In the first installment, Sarah A Gagliano Taliun, a researcher and assistant professor at the Université de Montréal, offers advice for early-career researchers trying to find balance.

I extend sincere thanks to the authors for contributing their words and time to *Academic Matters*. I am especially grateful to our student contributors who shared their experiences and offered recommendations for a more welcoming and supportive environment for their peers.

All articles in this issue are available on our website: www.academicmatters.ca.

Thank you. **AM**

Manisha Aggarwal-Schifellite is the Editor-in-Chief of Academic Matters and Communications Lead for OCUFA.

Changing perceptions of international education in Canada

An interview with Roopa Desai Trilokekar

The stories of international students and the policies that brought them to Canada are headline news. But international education wasn't always at the forefront of Canada's reputation abroad. Roopa Desai Trilokekar, a scholar of international education, explains the shifts in an interview with *Academic Matters*.



How did you become interested in studying international education?

I was an international student in the United States in the 1970s for seven years, and when I went back to India after my studies, I worked with the United States Education Foundation, which did binational educational exchanges between the U.S. and India. Working there, I saw how international politics was so intertwined with educational exchanges. At the same time, operationally, there was a conscious effort to keep academia separate from politics. I found this dynamic extremely fascinating.

What was the field of international education studies like when you started your work?

It was almost non-existent! There was very little Canadian presence in India or Asia more broadly at that time, especially when it came to higher education recruitment, and there was very little knowledge of or interest in Canadian higher education in India or elsewhere.

Back then, when it came to recruiting Asian students and Indian students in particular, the U.K., Australia, and the U.S. were very active. Canada was just “missing in action.” I was curious about the absence of Canada, particularly after

our development assistance program. Most of them came from developing countries—Commonwealth countries that we had affiliations with. The idea was to provide them higher education opportunities and for them to return home with these added qualifications. It was perceived as our “charitable” cause in engaging with the developing world. So there was a very positive perception in Canada of this program, but the numbers of students were very small. This shifted in the 1970s and 1980s, when Global Affairs Canada decided that education was part of our trade mission and there was little appetite to continue to fund international students with Government of Canada moneys. But the messaging was still positive, pro-multiculturalism, and pro-immigration. Students were seen as adding to the diversity and richness of our institutions, bringing in funds, and bringing in broader contributions to our communities.

It was during the time of Stephen Harper, that immigration and international education policies got tightly interlinked. In 2016, the federal Immigration Minister, John McCallum, labeled international students as “golden.” He said: “I believe international students are among the



There's been a major shift over time in Canada, from then to now.

I immigrated to Canada. My question was: If so many countries were invested in international education—not only in terms of recruitment of international students, but generally when it came to academic exchanges as a part of their international diplomacy—why was Canada absent? And for scholars at that time, this wasn't a subject that was discussed, let alone studied.

There's been a major shift over time in Canada, from then to now. There was nothing like what we have now in terms of scholarship, professional interest, and the way the subject has become part of the public discourse through the active engagement of newspapers and media.

What about the public perception of international students in Canada? How have you seen that change?

When Canada first hosted international students, they were fully funded by the Canadian government as part of

most fertile source of new immigrants for Canada.” The perception of international students was very positive. They were interested in coming to Canada, they were paying their way through school, and then working in the Canadian labour market. Canada did not have to spend money on or invest in them, but we were getting high returns, especially in terms of economic benefits from their tuition fees and other spending.

However, this narrative also altered over time. This is because studies started showing that international students were underperforming in the Canadian labour market, which worried Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The other thing was COVID, which I think shifted the discourse on international students. During COVID, Canadians had financial issues in our communities.



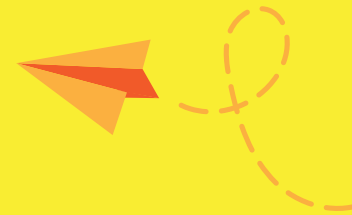
What research questions does the current moment spark for you, during a time of international student caps and more discussion about the conditions they face?

I'm very curious about these most recent shifts in policy and public perception around international students. How did we go from a policy that encouraged more international student enrolments and perceived international students as our future "golden immigrants" to one where the government now wants to cap numbers and even encourage more international students to return home after study? What created that shift politically and socially?

This is very interesting because as recently as during the COVID period, Canadian policymakers took leadership in being extremely proactive in supporting international students' work in Canada, at a time when other countries were far more restrictive about closing their borders, like Australia and New Zealand among many others. So why the big shift now?

I am extremely curious as to how immigration policy is shaping and reshaping this policy arena. Interestingly and

Students were seen as adding to the diversity and richness of our institutions, bringing in funds, and bringing in broader contributions to our communities.



More people were going to food banks. Housing prices were hitting all of us. Unethical players were going unchecked in the student recruitment market. More institutions turned to public-private partnerships that brought in many more students than before. The growth of students skyrocketed, and it was a very different student population coming in. They were not the master's or doctoral students of decades past, or the new international students in high schools. They were largely coming to colleges or private institutions. These were students who were told that student visas were the pathway to Canadian immigration. The combination of these factors started changing the discourse on international students. We also started seeing many more stories in the media about the exploitation of international students, which portrayed a very different image of international students than we had in the past.

ironically, this makes international student recruitment a policy that sometimes has very little to do with education.

When it comes to international education, the tensions between the federal government and the provinces are also very interesting to me. Each holds the other responsible when things do not add up, but there's very little policy coordination between them. There's also very little coordination within the federal government between departments that deal with immigration and global education, for example. I find the dance between the two governments very fascinating because it makes the Canadian dynamic unique in comparison to other countries.

This is why I am also curious about how Canada compares to other jurisdictions. Of course, countries often follow similar policy patterns and borrow policy from each other.

So one can study the origins and paths of how policy flows from one country to another. For example, Canada follows Australia when it comes to international student recruitment, and now Germany is following our model when it comes to immigration and its link to the recruitment of international students.

What are you learning from international students about how they see themselves in this web of policies?

International students live within our communities. There has been a lot of discussion more recently about what the response of the community has been to the influx of international students, not just the universities and colleges that are hosting these students. Following an International Student Summit in Brampton, Ontario, in 2021—which I facilitated—there is interest in looking at working collaboratively with other organizations within the community to see their engagement, their role, and how they perceive their role in relation to international students.


On the one hand, I am very curious to see how these community organizations engage and support international students, but on the other hand I am equally curious as to how these engagements also shift the role of universities and

we talk about EDI, we have to think about it from an international perspective, from a decolonial lens, and from the perspectives of different and distinct international student identities.

What should policymakers be thinking about regarding international education?

Ironically as a country welcoming so many diverse immigrants, I think in Canada, we're very provincial, very parochial, and very insular. We think of what benefits us. We rarely look with a comparative lens to understand broader international landscapes. When it comes to international education, why does Canada want to engage in international education and recruit international students? Don't we also want to invest in broader academic exchanges? Policymakers must engage with comparative research and scholarship in international education and develop broader long-term perspectives on the value and role of international education. This also means that on one hand, we need to rethink our global engagement and on the other, our funding model for higher education in Canada.

My research is focused on the macro policy level, and some fascinating issues arise for future study. But equally



Policymakers must engage with comparative research and scholarship in international education and develop broader long-term perspectives on the value and role of international education.

colleges in supporting international students. Another colleague, Lisa Brunner at the University of British Columbia, highlights how the postsecondary sector has now become the new gatekeeper of immigration. I don't think that's the role we had envisioned for postsecondary education, nor do I think of it as part of their mission. How will this change their relationship with and to international students?

Another issue related to the international student experience links to broader conversations on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) on our campuses. As EDI initiatives are encouraged at different levels within our institutions today, there continues to be silence on how we engage with international students as part of our "EDI population." We are still so resistant to discussing racism and issues of equity and inclusion in relation to international students. This is an area that needs new leadership. When

important for policymakers is research in understanding the international student experience. International students are far from the monolith we imagine. Today, they represent a wide diversity of bodies, identities, and narratives. For sound international student policy, we need a better understanding of this changing population. ■■

Roopa Desai Trilokekar is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at York University. Her research interests include the history of internationalization of higher education as policy in Canada, international students as ideal immigrants as a global policy discourse, and international education as a soft power/public diplomacy tool in context of shifting/new geopolitics.

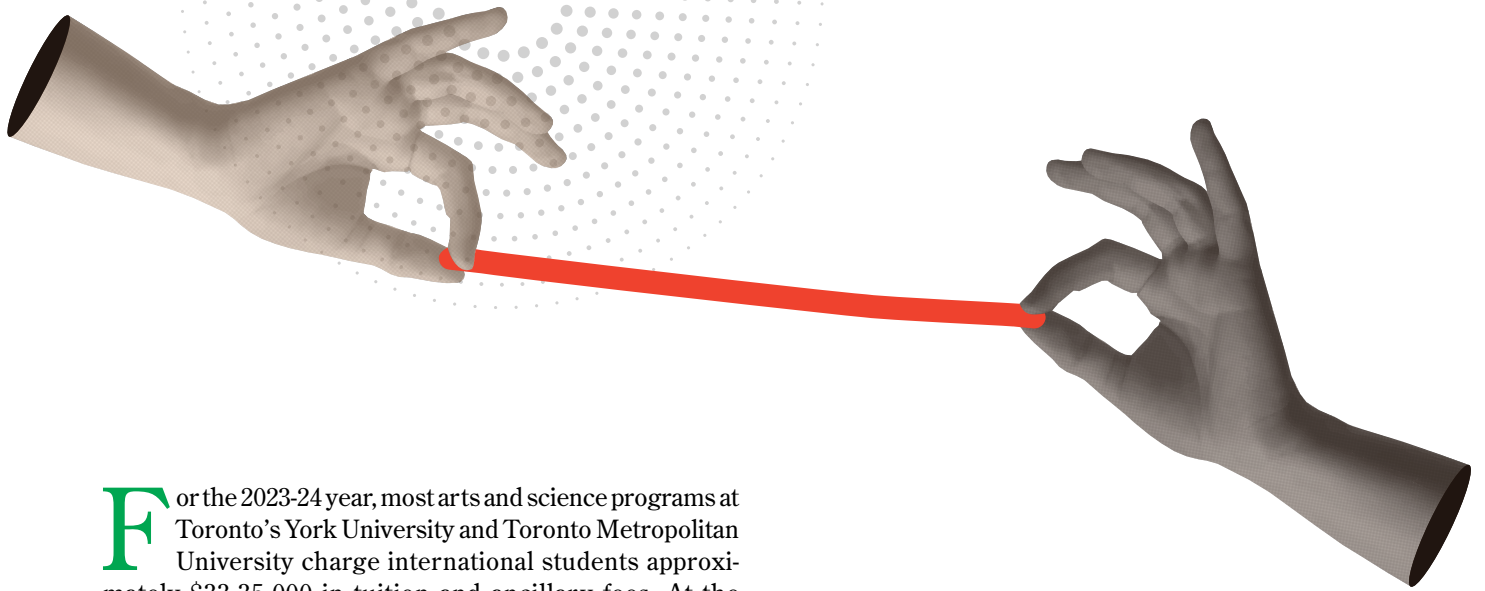
This interview was edited for length and clarity.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CANADA: A lesson from history

Soma Chatterjee



As international students become an integral part of the Canadian postsecondary education landscape, Soma Chatterjee asks: How did immigration, labour markets, and education get tied together, and how can we untangle their influence to improve student conditions? This piece originally appeared on the *Academic Matters* website. It has been updated to reflect the recent policy changes to the international higher education program.



For the 2023-24 year, most arts and science programs at Toronto’s York University and Toronto Metropolitan University charge international students approximately \$33-35,000 in tuition and ancillary fees. At the University of Toronto, this figure reaches to an astronomical \$60,000 per year. The figures for the same programs in each of these institutions range between \$6,000 to \$11,000 per year for domestic students.

When it comes to colleges, international students, paying between \$8,000 to \$20,000 per year, were recently reported to be outpacing government funding of colleges in Ontario.

These are outrageously high amounts. They are all the more outrageous when international students have to navigate a postsecondary system that is interested in the revenues they generate but is ill-equipped to support them, and a society just waking up to their basic human needs.

Stories of international students’ exploitation in the labour and housing markets are currently all over the Canadian news media. Once hailed by policymakers as immigrants of the future who are ready to take on the world by virtue of their compatibility with the Canadian labour market, they face tougher job prospects and are trailing behind Canadian-born graduates from the same postsecondary programs.

At best, news media and popular discussions cast international students as gullible, desperate for a first-world experience and ill-prepared for Canadian housing and employment realities. At worst, they are portrayed as malicious, cheating their way into the study-migration pathway. Most egregiously, they have been blamed for Canada’s housing crisis. This narrative persists despite evidence that capping student visa numbers to address the crisis will not work and that the housing crisis more accurately results from a nexus of developers, investors, varied levels of governments, zoning laws, and central bank policies.

Such an international student cap was indeed introduced this winter. Announcing a two-year intake cap and a return to a 20-hour-per-week work permit, Federal Immigration Minister Marc Miller invoked systemic abuse of the international education program by “bad actors,” and cited pressure on housing, healthcare, and other services due to the increased number of international students. He

also claimed these “decisive measures” will ensure the integrity of “our immigration system.”

The reality of international students’ lives and their interactions with postsecondary, healthcare, and housing systems are much more complex than what partisan political policies and popular portrayals suggest.

So how did a population actively courted to help Canada perform in the global race for skills, and considered vital to its post-pandemic recovery, come to experience such deplorable conditions, criminalization, and policy measures aimed to curtail their arrival and presence in this country?

The reality of international students’ lives and their interactions with postsecondary, healthcare, and housing systems are much more complex than what partisan political policies and popular portrayals suggest.

To answer that question and find accountability for this situation, we need to look at the history of labour recruitment strategies that encouraged the students to be here in the first place.

International students appeared on the Canadian labour and migration policy radar due to an intense global competition for mobile workers. For close to twenty years, Canada has been rearranging immigration, work permit, and visa policies to brand itself as a destination of choice for international students. In 2002, the federal government published *Knowledge Matters*, Canada’s first national Innovation Strategy (a project similar in significance to the 1991 report of the Social and Economic Council of Canada that advocated for a target immigration intake of one percent of Canada’s population). Published in two parts—

Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity, and Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians—the strategy declared “high skill” as a national priority and international graduates as a potential source of labour and a “significant economic benefit” to host institutions and local communities.

International students appeared on the Canadian labour and migration policy radar due to an intense global competition for mobile workers.

The governing federal Conservative Party, elected in 2006, embraced the rhetoric of fixing a “broken immigration system” and facilitated the restructuring of immigration policies toward recruiting skilled immigrants with Canadian experience.

This turn toward the job-ready immigrant further intensified the focus on international students. Canada’s federal and provincial governments signed a series of agreements to promote Canada as an attractive international study destination. This was followed by the creation of the federal Skills Research Initiative, then led by Human Resource and Skills Development Canada and Industry Canada. This project was instrumental in shaping the program of Canadian Experience Class (CEC), a two-tier permanent residency program that followed in 2008 into which international students were encouraged to apply for after first obtaining Canadian work experience through the postgraduate work permit. Prior to its introduction, international students had to leave the country after graduating and re-apply for permanent residency; a practice which came to be considered both “madness” and a lost opportunity.

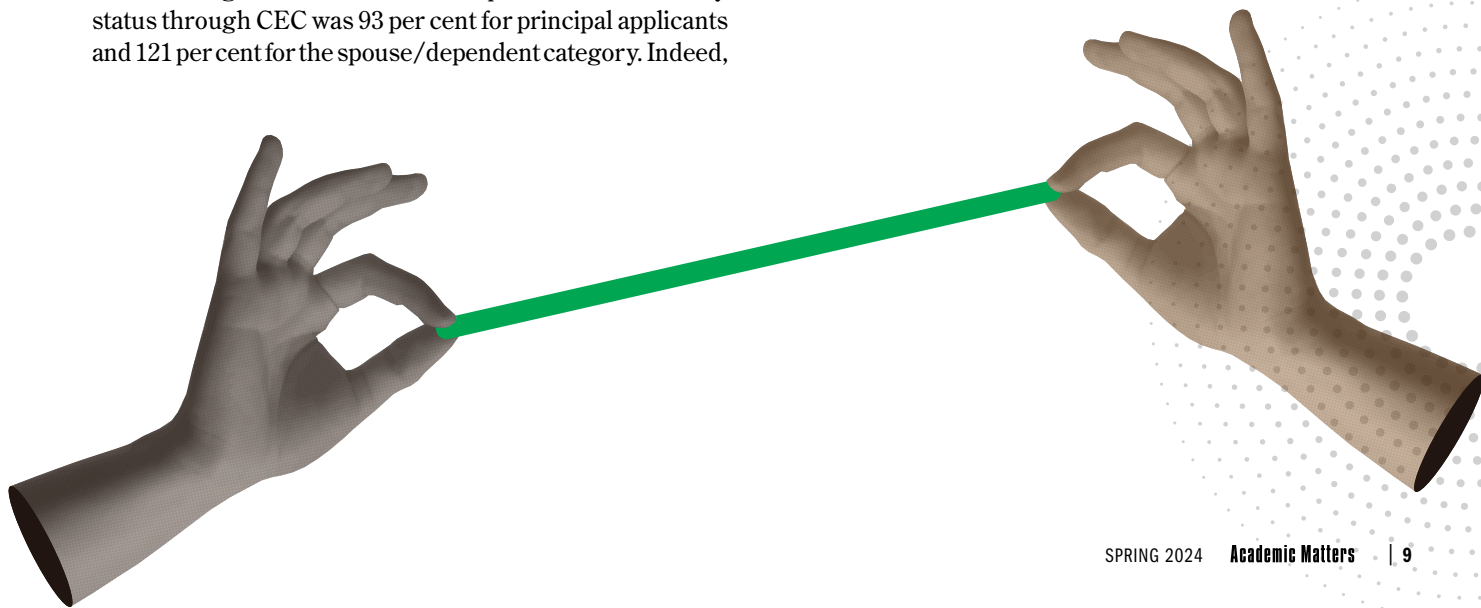
Between 2009 and 2013, the percentage of students transitioning from student visas to permanent residency status through CEC was 93 per cent for principal applicants and 121 per cent for the spouse/dependent category. Indeed,

the program was considered a potential game-changer for solving the problem of matching internationally trained, skilled immigrants with jobs in the Canadian labour market, after receiving (and paying for) a Canadian education.

Nearly a decade of frenzied policymaking culminated in the first International Education Strategy (2014-19), which declared the federal government’s goal to increase the number of international students from a quarter million to more than 450,000 by 2022, a number it exceeded very quickly. At the end of 2022, the Canadian Bureau of International Education reported that 807,750 international study permits were issued at all levels, the majority at the postsecondary level. The newly announced intake cap will result in approximately 360,000 approved study permits, a decrease of 35 per cent from 2023.

Amidst sensational media coverage of the desperate conditions faced by international students and partisan policy decisions that cast them as problems to be rid of or vulnerable subjects in need of protection, the political and economic conditions that shape this phenomenon are missing. These are conditions we all operate within. International students in Canada are facing a nationalist backlash that is both contemporary and has its roots in the capitalist, colonial racism that founded the country. It is dangerous to ignore this—and invaluable to understand and acknowledge it. As poet and writer M. NourbeSe Philip argues, in Canada, there has been a national commitment—indeed, an injunction—to forget the country’s racist history.

As the exploitation of international students continues to make headlines and capping their numbers is couched in a politics of care and concern, we would do well to remember that tensions between a white national imaginary and “alien” labour importation has been a key dynamic in Canadian nation-building since the country as we know it now was founded and even more so following the liberalization of immigration policies in 1962. Liberalization, the



proverbial “opening of the gates,” allowed large numbers of skilled immigrants from global south countries into Canada, particularly from the 1980s onward. Shortly afterward, media discourses of “taxi-driving Ph.D.s and pizza-delivering M.D.s” led to more academic research and public policy attention on “the problem” of immigrants’ labour market integration.

The incongruence between immigrants’ skills and the jobs they could find in Canada was a result of employers’ and regulatory bodies’ demand for Canadian experience that has been conceptualized as a “gatekeepers’ anxiety” and an instrument of nation-building even in the apparently de-territorialized skilled labour market. Similarly, rigorous scholarship has uncovered how the Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program keeps temporary migrant workers outside of the realms of Canadian citizenship by its very design. This country has a long history of recruiting racialized immigrant labour in its quest for economic prosperity while devaluing and expelling them from rights-bearing membership in Canadian societies.

What is happening to international students is no exception to this historic pattern. Currently, they face employment exploitation including low wages and poor working conditions, alongside a severe lack of appropriate housing. Under the new measures, they will have to demonstrate access to \$20,635 as opposed to \$10,000 previously. How is this setting students “up for the success they hope for”?

What is happening to international students is no exception to this historic pattern.

At the time of writing this update, discussions in the postsecondary sector seem fixated on the financial implications of the intake cap on their operations, importantly exposing the Faustian bargain the institutions struck while claiming to promote Canada as a destination of choice for the world’s brightest and the best. International students pump billions of dollars into the Canadian economy, supplementing—even standing in for—public funding, particularly in the large migrant-receiving provinces such as Ontario and British Columbia. As Roopa Desai Trilokekar and Lisa Brunner write in *University Affairs*: “The Government of Canada would not have allowed Canada’s higher education system to have the highest proportion of international student enrollments globally if they got nothing out of the deal.”

As an educator concerned about the rampant business model of higher education, I welcome the difficult conversations about public and private funding this situation has opened up. I particularly welcome career colleges coming under the policy radar. However, as we know, predatory

practices extend throughout the postsecondary sector. This points to systematic bleeding of the public education system starting in the 1990s or even earlier, by some accounts. It should be noted that nowhere in these policy re-visionings do we see a serious acknowledgement that the public education budget needs replenishing or that we clearly have lost track of the core values of higher education, leading to the policy problem of what Trilokekar and Brunner call “edugration.” As such, I agree with Yvonne Su and Leah Hamilton’s critique of the recent measures in *The Conversation* as “overly simplistic, untrue, and xenophobic,” that adds up to “an abdication of responsibility” on the part of the federal government.

International students, as we know, have not taken their circumstances lying down. They have collectively organized—under conditions of heavy debt and workloads, we must remember—against labour exploitation, threats of deportation and possible inadmissibility, deplorable housing conditions, scapegoating, and criminalization. Their resistance to situations of precarity and exploitation has been admirable. It remains to be seen how they respond to the newly introduced policy strictures. Notably, professional programs are left out of the measures, as are work permits for graduate and doctoral students and their spouses. This will have significant impacts on students who undertake overseas education as a pathway for family migration. The moves seem well positioned to deepen class divisions and solidarity among a cohort of students known to be highly politically active.

International higher education in Canada, as I show in a forthcoming book, came to be entangled with migration to set immigrants up for success and for the skilled migration program to succeed. It now seems imperative to disentangle the two to set international students up for success and for the study migration program to retain its integrity.

Those of us who care for labour and migrant justice, and the core values of international higher education, have a responsibility to push back against this blatant scapegoating of immigrants and students for what are clearly repetitive and spectacular failures of policy imaginations. Moral outrage is not nearly good enough. We need to expose and articulate the pattern of recruiting racialized labour only to expel them from national membership as foundational to this nation. We must state, unequivocally, that what is happening is not anomalous to Canada, but is typical to the model of racialized western nation-building practices. Only then we can envision policy pathways that are robust, ethical, and far-sighted. ■■

Soma Chatterjee is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work, and Associate member in the graduate program of Interdisciplinary Studies in the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies at York University. She is also a member of the Academic Matters Editorial Advisory Board.

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CRISIS IN CANADA: A Northern Perspective

Josia Prince and Benjamin Maiangwa



From Thunder Bay, Ontario, Josia Price and Benjamin Maiangwa explore the educational, financial, and cultural challenges that international students face in Northern Ontario, and the solutions that could improve their experiences.

The aim of the university is not simply to teach bread winning, or to furnish teachers for the public schools, or to be a center of polite society; it is, above all, to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment which forms the secret of civilization.

– W.E.B Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Our aim in this piece is to suggest ways in which the adjustment between “bread winning” and “real life” within a “polite society” can be obtained for international students in Canada. To succeed, many international students must play along with the dominant “polite society” in which they work and study. At the very least, they must “be in the right place at the right time, having white allies who opened doors, benefiting from universal health care, state-subsidized tuition and academic scholarship,” according to McGill University professor Debra Thompson in her book, *The Long Road Home: On Blackness and Belonging*. Thompson’s quote also points to the fact that international students come to Canada not only to gain the benefits of our educational system, but also with hopes and dreams for a new life as Canadian immigrants.

To our knowledge, there are few surprises about the experiences of international students in Canada, particularly in our area of Thunder Bay, Ontario. However, the thresholds for tolerating financial hardships, language barriers, mental strain, food insecurity, and similar challenges have been exceeded in our region. Consequently, many international students in Thunder Bay and in other Northern communities find themselves on the brink of complete collapse and in desperate need of substantial support in these areas. These problems stand in the way of international students realizing the “growing knowledge of life” that many come to university to achieve.

CHALLENGES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The transformative power of Canadian universities is synonymous with that of a portal: international students have chosen to pursue postsecondary education in Canada because Canadian university certifications provide them with the professional skills required to be physically,



financially, and mentally stable. Therefore, Canadian post-secondary institutions must provide an all-inclusive environment where students hone technical knowledge and skills while remaining responsive to new forms of knowledge and societal demands.

However, none of this can happen in a vacuum.

A lack of government funding for universities and student assistance grants coupled with high tuition fees affects the chances of our international students to secure housing and cater to their everyday needs. Annually, international students pay about \$40,000 CAD per year minimum; this does not offer our students much of a financial break given the extreme difficulties they face in funding their education in Canada. To compound matters, most institutions

These problems stand in the way of international students realizing the “growing knowledge of life” that many come to university to achieve.

offer fewer entrance scholarships and graduate assistantships for international students than for domestic students. This has become more acute since the pandemic started.

These challenges exist even though the overall increase in the population of international students in Canada has many positive impacts on the economy. The total annual expenditures of international students were \$18.4 billion and \$22.3 billion in 2017 and 2018, respectively. International students in Canada are indeed “big business” for universities, but also for the broader economy with which they are in a dynamic relationship.

International students in Canada are indeed “big business” for universities, but also for the broader economy with which they are in a dynamic relationship.

For international students without a robust support base in their community of study, the reality is that the continuous perpetuation of cycles of injustice may affect their ability to fully realize their talents and expertise. Worse still, these injustices can harm their aspirations to attain their professional goals in Canada even as they contribute to the economy.

A NORTHERN PERSPECTIVE

There are more than 1,900 international students at Lakehead University between its Thunder Bay and Orillia, Ontario campuses, according to university reports. This represents just over 20 per cent of the student population. Almost 2,000 international students attend college in the Thunder Bay area as well. We are particularly interested in the international students at Lakehead University who call Thunder Bay home. This “home” should provide these students with a safe physical and mental environment for working, studying, and recreation. However, the housing crisis, decrepit transit systems, and the harsh reality of living in a cold, relatively isolated, predominantly English-speaking Canadian city can jeopardize their physical and mental well-being. This is quite alarming as international students are an integral part of the Thunder Bay community. They bolster the economy as they pay almost three times more in tuition and on-campus housing fees than local students. They also contribute to Thunder Bay’s cultural and linguistic vibrancy, and participate in its workforce.

On Lakehead University’s campuses in Thunder Bay and Orillia, there are international student organizations and initiatives that are working to support its students. In Thunder Bay, notably, International Student Services (ISS) have physical offices and safe spaces for international students to access immigration services, prepare for exams, or simply hang out together. Additionally, ISS provides and subsidizes excursions and hosts culturally appropriate events for international students, enabling students to express their satisfaction or grievances with life at Lakehead University. As a result of the work that ISS does, international students have access to a secure, supportive environment. This is one way in which international students and the university are working together to help students overcome some of the external challenges they face while studying in Thunder Bay.

Furthermore, Lakehead University’s Student Health and Wellness and Residence Services provide on campus health services like therapy dogs, on-campus doctor visits, free medical tests, and weekly events to keep domestic and international students healthy and balanced. The Lakehead

We are particularly interested in the international students at Lakehead University who call Thunder Bay home.

University Student Union is also active on campus, and is a member of the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. On November 8th 2023, CFS-Ontario organized a National Day of Action calling for publicly funded, free, and accessible education. Lakehead students participated in this action, and although this was a bold protest that has yet to yield its desired goals, it provided international students in particular with an elevated platform to present and oppose the daily financial injustices they face.

Despite these initiatives, Lakehead’s on-campus and unionized services still fail to address the practical challenges that international students encounter in Thunder Bay. The most pressing concern is the lack of affordable housing, which has been a recurring problem for students. Despite creating 167 new housing unit starts in 2023 (surpassing its 2023 provincial housing target of 161 new housing unit starts), there are still concerns about slow growth and staffing shortages in the construction industry that could hinder housing development in the city.



A HOUSING SOLUTION FOR THUNDER BAY STUDENTS

Our plea is for citizens of the Thunder Bay community who have large homes with multiple unoccupied spaces to consider the possibility of opening up these spaces to international students. In doing so, Thunder Bay residents can share the cultural and social resources that international students bring while offering them a convenient environment to study and thrive in Thunder Bay. This may also encourage students to make Thunder Bay their home after completing their studies.

To date, there has been little movement towards a streamlined house-sharing initiative in Thunder Bay. It is a relatively new solution to the expanding housing crisis and will depend on the willingness of the Thunder Bay community to open their homes to international students. It is even more distressing that, in the interim, landlords are taking advantage of the housing crisis and hiking up rental rates.

Though this request seems demanding, we must all remember that when one part of the community suffers, we all suffer. International students need secure lodging, and Thunder Bay residents can be a key part of creating that security. Aside from the fiscal benefit of lodging an international student, there exists a unique opportunity for homeowners to make students' lives in Thunder Bay

exceptionally rewarding in terms of providing stability, introducing students to a different culture, and helping them achieve academic goals.

When the material needs of international students are met—including stable housing, financial assistance, educational support, and food security—they have more options and opportunities to embrace the fullness of their educational experience. This includes having time for extra-curricular activities, meeting with professors, participating in research projects, and putting down roots in the community.

Indeed, Statistics Canada reports that “More than half of international students who had come to study for a master’s or doctoral degree in the 2000s became a landed immigrant within 10 years.” In principle, this is a good arrangement, but universities take advantage of this aspiration by requiring much of the financial sacrifices to come from the students themselves, even those who are in the most need.

Canadian authorities at all levels must make determined, practical, and sustainable efforts to ensure the well-being of international students.

Ultimately, international students contribute to the overall and long-term well-being of the Canadian economy and society. They offer a unique solution to Canada’s declining birth rate by immigrating to Canada, they contribute to Canada’s economic goals across multiple occupational sectors, and they enhance Canada’s soft power internationally. Thus, Canadian authorities at all levels must make determined, practical, and sustainable efforts to ensure the well-being of international students. This is the only way to ensure that Canada remains one of the top destinations for students from around the world. ■■

Josia Prince is a fourth-year Political Science and Pre-Law Student at Lakehead University. As a Bahamian-Trinidadian student, she has been directly and indirectly exposed to the challenges international students experience every day. Her growing desire to be a voice for the voiceless inspires her to advocate for authentic, appropriate solutions to prevalent issues in her immediate and global community.

Benjamin Maiangwa is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Lakehead University. Maiangwa’s projects and research explore notions of contested belonging, mobility, and how people experience conflict and peace in everyday life.

Migration for education OR education for migration?

Anukriti Randev and Kriti Sharma



Anukriti Randev, an international student, and Kriti Sharma, a new permanent resident turned domestic student, set out to learn how and why students from the Punjab region of India come to Canada—and the myths and realities they encounter along the way.

The contemporary influx of students from Punjab to Canada

The flow of students from India to Canada over the last decade has been unprecedented. In 2022, India surpassed China as the leading origin country for international students in Canada, with roughly 40 percent of the study permits in Canada held by Indian-origin students. One region in India, Punjab, dominates discussions on student migration to Canada. This distinction became more prominent recently, when nearly 700 Indian international students, (most of whom were from Punjab) feared deportation from Canada due to fraudulent admission letters.

Both of us are a part of this influx—or so we thought. We came to Canada in 2022; one of us was an international student, and the other was a new permanent resident. We were both pursuing studies at a world-class university and wanted to gain exposure to international education and skills development through our master's programs. We knew the numbers, but they did not reflect what we saw at our university. Instead, we saw the statistics reflected in young Punjabi students over-represented at restaurants waiting tables, at our apartment building's security office, at the mall behind counters, and at several small private colleges—the so-called diploma mills of Canada.

The data corroborated what we saw. As per a StatsCan study, the recent growth in the share of international students from India at the college level has been notable. From 2000 to 2004, four per cent of international students came from India. But by the 2015-to-2019 period, India was the number one source country, making up 67 per cent of international students intending to study at the college level (for non-university postsecondary programs), against the 21.3 per cent of Indian-origin students intending to study in university programs. Concurrently, the labour market participation of international students studying at the college

level has increased markedly from seven per cent in 2000 to 57 per cent in 2018.

Thanks to a common course, we crossed paths and talked about our observations regarding Punjabi students. The similarity in our observations prompted us to engage with Punjabi students around us. We learned of their trials and tribulations but most of all their aspirations to stay in Canada. The more we observed, the more interested we grew in situating our observations within the broader context of the migration-education-work dynamics in Canada. But the origin of our interest went further back in time.



An attempt to understand the numbers

Both of us had slightly different journeys leading us to Canada, yet our shared aspiration was to migrate for educational pursuits. For one of us, the master's program was to be a launchpad for a career in human rights advocacy, and for the other, a stepping stone to a Ph.D. As we navigated the customary university application procedure, seeking guidance from agents, we couldn't help but notice the extensive network of intermediaries firmly established in Punjab. This network framed Canada not just as

a study destination, but primarily as an immigration destination. Agents often pitched to aspirants the promise of citizenship or permanent residency following a small stint at some diploma mill. Surprisingly absent from these conversations was any emphasis on the particular field of study or career aspirations—a stark contrast to the conventional discourse surrounding higher education decisions.

From our observations in India and then in Canada, it quickly became clear to us that the narrative of Punjabi youth migrating to Canada goes beyond the stereotypical tale of upper-class and upper-middle-class students in pursuit of a global education experience. It encapsulates the aspirations of almost every Punjabi youth, irrespective of financial standing, longing to reach Canada. But the question remains: What precisely fuels this desire?

We discussed this with our professor, Ito Peng, Professor of Sociology and Public Policy, and Canada Research Chair in Global Social Policy at University of Toronto, and she encouraged us to dig deeper. With that motivation, we applied for, and secured a research funding from the Asian Institute at U of T. And thus, we set out to unpack the story of the Punjabi youth aspiring to study in Canada. We conducted a month-long ethnographic field-work study in May 2023 in Punjab, talking to 34 aspirants between the ages of 18 and 27 years. Our field site was Jalandhar district in the Doaba region and Ropar district in the Malwa region of Punjab. While the Doaba region has been the epicentre of emigration in Punjab since the 1900s when early emigrants from Jalandhar (then Jullundur) and Hoshiarpur (another Doaba district) became the first South Asians to immigrate to Canada, the Malwa region is also witnessing an extraordinary rise in its youth emigration.

The interviews were semi-structured, lasted from 30 to 45 minutes, and included questions regarding factors influencing students' decision-making in choosing to study in Canada. The idea was to elicit narratives that provided insights into the multifaceted aspects shaping their choices, ranging from personal motivations to external influences.

For immigration or education? Situating priorities of Punjabi youth

Our initial examination of the data suggests that the migration of Punjabi youth to Canada is not purely academic. Of the various intriguing facets we uncovered, this article will specifically delve into the most dominant aspiration within our sample: the desire for immigration, often synonymous with the pursuit of a better life, seen as impossible in Punjab or possible only in Canada.

Our interviews revealed that Punjabi students aspiring for Canadian education can most accurately be identified as pre-migrants pursuing long-term settlement through education. We observed a clear blurring of the line that separates “migration for education” and “education for migration” in the case of our sample. The majority of our interviewees (31 out of 34) answered in the negative when we inquired about their plans to return to India after the completion of their studies, highlighting the primacy of immigration as an implicit aspiration behind the move to Canada. Consider these responses to the question: *Do you plan to return to India after the completion of your studies?*

21-year-old female aspirant: No. What will I do in India? I will call my mother and sister to Canada once I am settled. I will live here [in Canada].

18-year-old male aspirant: No, if I get better job opportunities there [in Canada], I would not want to come back.

Clearly, international student mobility in our sample of Punjabi students was dominated by “education for migration.” This observation aligns with broader trends, as indicated by the 2021 Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) International Student Survey, where a substantial 43.3 per cent of international students in Canada expressed their intention to apply for permanent residency following three years of work experience in the country. In contrast, a mere 18.8 per cent articulated a plan to return to their home country after three years, with the potential consideration of coming back to Canada at a later time.

While the concept of pursuing education as a pathway to migration was something we both contemplated before delving into our research, we were taken aback by the sheer complexity of the whole situation. The mobility of Punjabi students to Canada is a multifaceted phenomenon, driven by a multitude of overlapping aspirations and mediated by a complex infrastructure comprising various actors (state as well as non-state actors like third-party recruitment agents), networks (including networks of friends and family abroad), and technologies (social media and the internet).

Examining the Canadian policy context

Persistent aspirations are supported by corresponding opportunities. In the realm of students' education-cum-immigration aspirations, Canada's immigration policy stands out as a pivotal and defining opportunity. The surge in international students in Canada can be attributed to governmental initiatives focused on actively recruiting students from abroad, leveraging the strategic promise of citizenship.

The introduction of varied fees for international students in the 1970s, coupled with budget cuts to postsecondary educational institutions until the early 2000s, gave rise to an interdependent ecosystem. Within this context, the federal government responded by

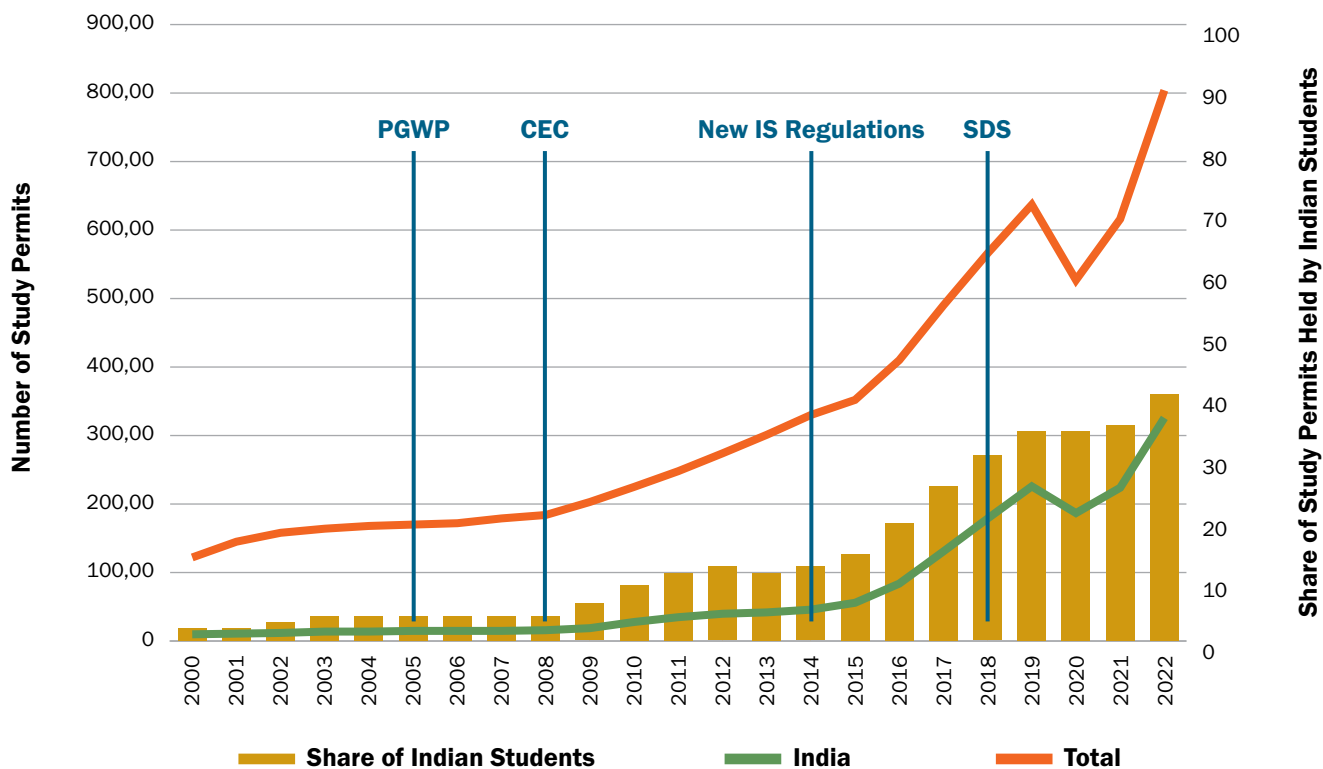
implementing and expanding supportive policies and strategic plans, aiming to bolster international student recruitment. Simultaneously, educational institutions explored avenues to boost enrolment by attracting students subject to differential fees.

In 2001, the Canadian federal government initiated a crucial overhaul of its immigration policy by replacing the 1976 Immigration Act with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. They redefined studying in Canada as the inaugural step towards possible citizenship by introducing different pathways to citizenship, including the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) and the Provincial Nominee Program.

This strategic shift aimed to concurrently address the immediate recruitment needs of universities and colleges while recognizing the long-term potential of students as ideal immigrants. By 2012, international education became the most valuable export from Canada and the government responded by further encouragement to bring in more students. The federal government released its plan with detailed targets to double the number of international students by 2022 as part of the plan to include post-secondary education in Canada's economic policy regime.

The Student Direct Stream (SDS) facilitated a swift processing time of just 20 days upon the submission of all

Figure 1: Number of Study Permit holders in Canada 2000-2022^{1,2}



1. Source: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/90115b00-f9b8-49e8-afa3-b4cff8facaee/resource/3897ef92-a491-4bab-b9c0-eb94c8b173ad>

2. Note: The post-graduate work permit program (PGWPP) was introduced in the mid-2000s, the uncapped Canadian Experience Class (CEC) in 2008, new regulations for international student (IS) in 2014 that automatically authorized the study permit holders to work off-campus for up to 20 hours per week during the academic session and full-time during scheduled breaks without the need to apply for a separate work permit, and the Student Direct Stream (SDS) in 2018.

required documents for study permit applications. After finishing their studies, students under this program became eligible for a post-graduation work permit, enabling them to acquire valuable work experience. This experience, in turn, contributed to their eligibility to apply for permanent residency (PR) through various immigration pathways and programs. Consequently, these students had the opportunity to transition from temporary foreign workers to economic immigrants through a two-step immigration selection process.

Students in our sample were cognizant of these policies, in part due to recruitment agents that have been promising a study route to citizenship for years, and in part due to a “culture of migration” in Punjab that has made the state so saturated by ideas, practices, and stories of the “student-turned-immigrant” that many young people in Punjab expect to live and work in Canada.

20-year-old aspirant: There are options of PR which is difficult in other countries like Australia and even England. I know a relative who has been in Australia for so long but is till now not [a] permanent [resident].

The collective impact of these policies and programs is evident in the overall success in attracting an impressive number of Indian students in the last decade (Figure 1). Despite a notable decrease in study permit applications from India amid diplomatic issues, the issuance of over 215,910 study permits to Indian students until November 2023 maintained India’s position as the primary source of international students last year.

The restrictive policy turn

Another critical piece in this story is the retrenchment of the Canadian state from funding of educational institutions, which

made the latter over-reliant and often greedy for international tuition. If acceptance into a one-year program at a community college became a pathway to citizenship for Punjabi students, Canadian community colleges also exploited this trend extensively, building new campuses, enrolling more and more students and rolling out programs that promised little in terms of career advancement. In a bid to preserve the integrity of the international education system and relieve some pressure on housing, healthcare, and other services, the federal government finally decided to intervene, taking a sudden quantum leap towards restrictive regulations in early 2024.

The first change involved doubling the minimum financial requirement for international students from \$10,000 to \$20,635 CAD, exclusive of tuition and any additional fees for accompanying family members. This may seem restrictive, but a closer examination reveals a more nuanced picture. The previous \$10,000 CAD requirement, in addition to tuition, seemed disproportionately burdensome for those from humble backgrounds. Our interviews, however, confirmed the financial resiliency of students from Punjab. Despite the considerable expenses associated with international education, respondents (including those with limited economic means) expressed a strong commitment to invest substantial amounts, such as \$40,000 CAD annually, in their education and living expenses in Canada.

It’s clear from our research that doubling the financial requirement may dissuade some prospective students, but not all. Instead, the change is more likely to put more financial pressure on families to send their children to Canada. This translates into students taking on low-skilled, low-wage work to offset high tuition, living expenses, and paying off the family debt.

The second change was the creation of a cap on study permits given out to international students for postsecondary studies. This



The change is more likely to put more financial pressure on families to send their children to Canada.

new policy could significantly restrict student mobility from Punjab to Canada, in part because the cap is selectively applied to non-master's programs, such as college diplomas, where Punjabi students are overrepresented.

Thirdly, changes to work permit accessibility for students and their families were also introduced. Starting September 1, 2024, postgraduate work permits (PGWP) will no longer be available for students in public college-private institution models. Furthermore, the Canadian government has specified that open work permits for spouses of international students will be limited, with eligibility extended only to spouses of graduate or professional students. Returning to our earlier discussion on immigration aspirations and the reliance on securing employment after completing studies through the two-step immigration pathway, the restricted availability of PGWP could significantly hamper the aspirations and opportunities of Punjabi youth.

The true implications of these changes can be known only in time; however the long-term outlook hints at both opportunities and challenges for Punjabi youth. In terms of opportunity, the changes to the education-migration pathway could generate a positive change for education in Punjab to meet students' need for a strong educational background that would enable them to compete for admission to master's or doctoral programs in leading Canadian universities. The increased financial requirement will present a considerable challenge for poor families in Punjab. Perhaps the most damaging possibility under this new landscape may be the attempts of youth, blinded by the Canadian dream, to resort to illegal modes to enter Canada (already established in relation to the United States), putting them even more at the mercy of unscrupulous agents in the system than before.

Looking ahead

Canada, the land of opportunities, welcomes thousands of immigrants every year, with international students constituting a significant proportion of this diverse demographic.

As we analyze the empirical evidence we've gathered, our objective is to untangle the mixed aspirations of students heading to Canada and situate them within the structures that motivate, facilitate, and constrain these aspirations. The aim is to outline some key aspects of the student side of the international education story in Canada and connect it to the contemporary realities of a globalized world where education, migration, and work are increasingly interlinked. However, we understand that this study is limited in its scope. The journey of Punjabi youth may or may not be replicated elsewhere, and this is a question we aim to explore in the future.

As we wait out the impact of recent policy changes on the trajectories of Punjabi youth aspiring to study in Canada, it will be important to understand the nuanced motivations and aspirations of these youths beyond academic pursuits. In researching their aspirations through this study, we aim to mirror their desired future, and their relative autonomy and efficacy in shaping it. ■■

Anukriti Randev is a Master of Global Affairs student at University of Toronto with a background in international law from India. She is currently working as a Data and Policy Analysis Intern at World Education Services (WES).

Kriti Sharma is Master of Public Policy student at the University of Toronto and an R.F. Harney Graduate Research Fellow in Ethnic, Immigration, and Pluralism Studies. Her research interests are situated at the intersection of economics and social systems, a field she plans to delve into further during her upcoming Ph.D. journey.



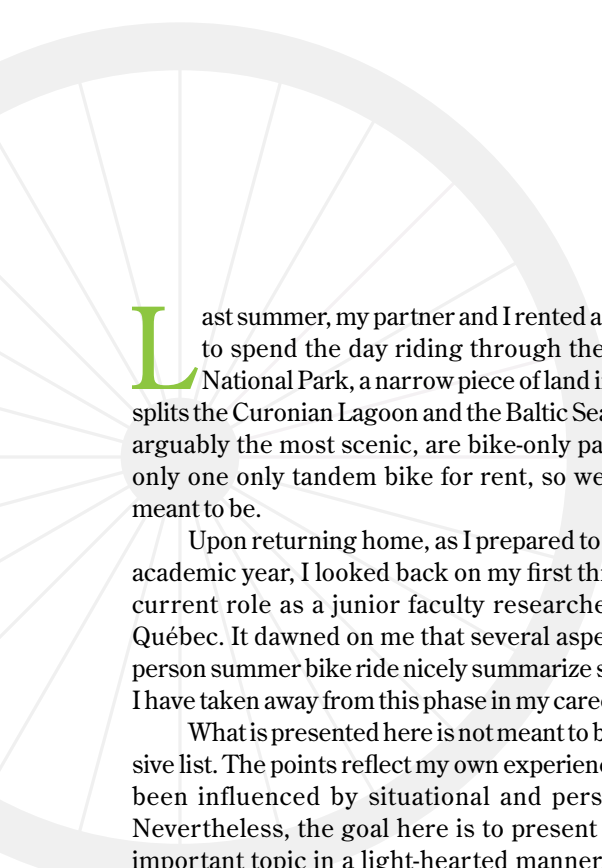
Our objective is to untangle the mixed aspirations of students heading to Canada and situate them within the structures that motivate, facilitate, and constrain these aspirations.

My first few years as an early-career researcher: Five lessons learned from a tandem bike ride

Sarah A Gagliano Taliun

In a new feature, *The Life Academic*, contributors reflect on how life and work intersect for faculty, academic librarians, academic professionals, researchers, and others. In the first installment, Sarah A Gagliano Taliun, a researcher and assistant professor at the Université de Montréal, offers advice for early-career researchers trying to find balance.





Last summer, my partner and I rented a tandem bicycle to spend the day riding through the Curonian Spit National Park, a narrow piece of land in Lithuania that splits the Curonian Lagoon and the Baltic Sea. Certain trails, arguably the most scenic, are bike-only paths. There was only one only tandem bike for rent, so we figured it was meant to be.

Upon returning home, as I prepared to welcome a new academic year, I looked back on my first three years in my current role as a junior faculty researcher in Montréal, Québec. It dawned on me that several aspects of that two-person summer bike ride nicely summarize some key points I have taken away from this phase in my career.

What is presented here is not meant to be a comprehensive list. The points reflect my own experiences, which have been influenced by situational and personal contexts. Nevertheless, the goal here is to present insight into an important topic in a light-hearted manner, and hopefully inspire others in similar situations to enjoy the ride.

1. ROUGH PATCHES AND STEEP HILLS ARE INEVITABLE, SO KEEP PEDALING FORWARD.

We encountered several hills during the tandem bike ride last summer that had to be overcome to complete the looped path. Those parts required a more concerted pedaling effort and more concentration to overcome the inclines. The experience helped me reflect on my life three summers ago, when I joined the ranks of many others becoming comfortable with the tasks and responsibilities of a new position, alongside moving to a new city amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

I was in a privileged position as my computational-based research could continue in a relatively smooth manner remotely. However, a natural part of research is the bumpy patches along the way that need to be overcome, such as rejected grants, experiments that need to go back to the drawing board, performance challenges with a team member, etc. Both in this line of work and on the bike path, when you reach a rough patch, focus on the task at hand to overcome it. Soon enough, your wheels will return to smoother terrain.




2. RIDING A TANDEM BIKE IS NOT A SOLITARY ENDEAVOR. NEITHER IS STARTING UP YOUR LAB OR WORKING WITH COLLEAGUES.

Research, in any domain, cannot be done in isolation, whether you lead a wet or dry lab, or a larger or smaller group. Networking is key. Presenting your work at your own institution, nationally, or in international settings is valuable. Attending conferences, for example, is a powerful way to renew old connections and make new ones, as well as to talk about your work and to learn about the latest work of others. Virtual options are particularly useful for those for whom extended time away from home is not feasible. The characteristics of teamwork and collegiality are also a central part of

a tandem bike ride as both riders must pedal. On my ride, we communicated throughout the journey regarding taking breaks (see point 4), strategizing for upcoming demanding stretches, and more. Working alone simply doesn't cut it if you want to cross the finish line.

3. PRACTICE MAKES (CLOSER TO) PERFECT.


Riding a tandem bike is not identical to riding a standard bicycle. There is a bit of a learning curve in figuring out the balancing and coordination. The more you do, the more you get used to it, and now I feel much more comfortable on the pedals. Certain skills as a junior faculty researcher also require practice, practice, and more practice to get the hang of things. Let's take grant writing, for instance. I was lucky to have generous colleagues to read through and provide comments on my draft proposals, to meet in person to bounce off ideas, to team up in writing grants together, and to share examples of their old grants with me. There is still plenty of room for improvement, but when I compare text that I prepared when I first started to more recent grant submissions, it is evident that my grant writing skills have continuously evolved with each new grant writing season, thanks in large part to these opportunities.



If you are taking care of yourself, you will enjoy your work more.

4. TAKE BREAKS.

Our cycling route was a 60 km loop, during which we took two breaks to stretch our legs and take refreshments. As someone with high-achiever personality traits, which many readers may also identify with, separating work from other aspects of my life and not working while on "vacation" has been something that I have always struggled with. Looking back at my first three years as a junior faculty, it is in this facet that I could have done better. The breaks gave me a boost of energy to continue the journey. If I can learn to apply this lesson to my work life, I am sure that I will feel more refreshed to tackle the next challenge.



Certain skills as a junior faculty researcher also require practice, practice, and more practice to get the hang of things.

5. ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE!

I strongly believe that you should enjoy what you do. This is not to say that every moment is going to be fun. On a tandem bike, adjustments can and should be made if you are feeling continual discomfort. You can adjust the saddle. You can adjust the height of your handlebars. You can change your riding partner. Similarly, adjustments can and should be made by an early-career researcher to make work enjoyable. It is okay to say no. It is okay to seek out and ask for help from trusted colleagues, and it is okay to take breaks. If you are taking care of yourself, you will enjoy your work more.

I am grateful for and have learned a lot from the experiences during this initial part of my ride, and I look forward to seeing what awaits further along the path, which will no doubt continue to be composed of smoother parts as well as obstacles. You are not alone on your journey. Keep going at your own pace supported by your teammates.

I really appreciated the collaborative aspect of the tandem bike ride, and the next time the opportunity arises, I would ride tandem again. Without a doubt, it was a



demanding ride, both physically and mentally. However, for me, riding with a teammate made the journey feel less exhausting compared to riding alone. The lessons extrapolated from this bike ride are not only applicable to the journey of an early-career researcher, but also more broadly into other facets of life. ■■

Sarah A Gagliano Taliun is an assistant professor at the Université de Montréal.

COMPELLING NEW WORK

TRICKY GROUNDS
INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN CANADIAN UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION
CANDACE BRUNETTE-DEBASSIGE

CHALLENGE TO CIVILIZATION
INDIGENOUS WISDOM AND THE FUTURE
BLAIR STONECHILD

GOING TO SEED
ESSAYS ON IDLENESS, NATURE, & SUSTAINABLE WORK
KATE J. NEVILLE

THE GOOD WALK
Creating New Paths on Traditional Prairie Trails
MATTHEW R. ANDERSON

RESTORING RELATIONS THROUGH STORIES
From Dinéyah to Denezhah
RENAE WATCHMAN
FOREWORD BY EUCI TAPAHONSO, NAVAJO NATION A FIRST POET LAUREATE

FROM UNIVERSITY OF REGINA PRESS

University of Regina Press
UofRPress.ca

creative SASKATCHEWAN PARTICIPATION MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH CREATIVE SASKATCHEWAN'S MARKET AND EXPORT DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM.

Academic Matters is ONE CLICK AWAY



BLOGS
JOB LISTINGS
FEATURES
COMMUNITY
EVENTS
RESOURCES

Academic Matters is an engaging journal of commentary, analysis, and research on trends in higher education published by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. All content is available online for free, with new articles added every week. Visit us today!

www.academicmatters.ca

OCUFA

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des associations des professeurs des universités de l'Ontario



Insurance built for all members of the education community

Get personalized service, exclusive discounts on car and home insurance, and a **\$20 gift card of your choice when you get a quote!**

Get an online quote at: **[OTIPinsurance.com/OCUFA20](https://otipinsurance.com/OCUFA20)**
or call **1-844-235-6847** to speak with a broker and mention this offer.

Why OTIP?

- Save up to 25% on car insurance
- Save up to 50% on home insurance when you insure both your car and home with OTIP*
- In-house claims experts to handle claims quickly and fairly
- Convenient payment options, including online payment and monthly plans

