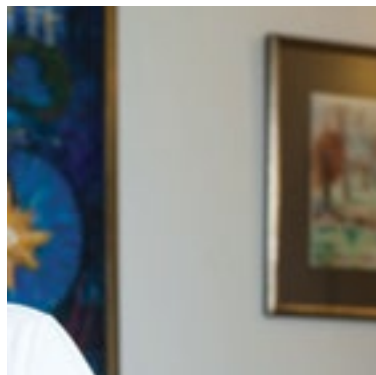




# *Making* **NOVA SCOTIA** **Stronger**



STORIES OF  
**Community Builders**

**isans** | Immigrant Services  
Association of Nova Scotia

## MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

It is with pleasure that I write this message for *Making Nova Scotia Stronger*. This is a wonderful collection of immigrant stories and an inspiration to all of us.



The stories in *Making Nova Scotia Stronger* highlight the spirit of those who immigrate to Nova Scotia to build a new life. These success stories are of Nova Scotians; of entrepreneurs, community developers, social activists and public servants who have built and continue to build and enhance this province.

*Making Nova Scotia Stronger* illustrates the connection between a more robust population, a strong economy, and shows the importance of the work we are doing to attract and support newcomers to settle and stay in Nova Scotia.

Thank you to all who chose to come to Nova Scotia and make it your home. Your stories show how important you are to building our province's economy and strengthening our communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen McNeil". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Honourable Stephen McNeil, MLA  
Premier

# *Making Nova Scotia Stronger*

## STORIES OF COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Nova Scotia has been built on successive waves of immigration - increasing our diversity, enriching our communities and expanding our cultural heritage.

To celebrate and raise awareness of the contributions of immigrants to Nova Scotia, ISANS has collected 23 stories of community builders who are helping to strengthen our province.

This is but a small sample of the wonderful stories of newcomers who are creating opportunities and helping our economy grow. We hope this collection will encourage you to learn more about your neighbours from around the world who now call Nova Scotia home.

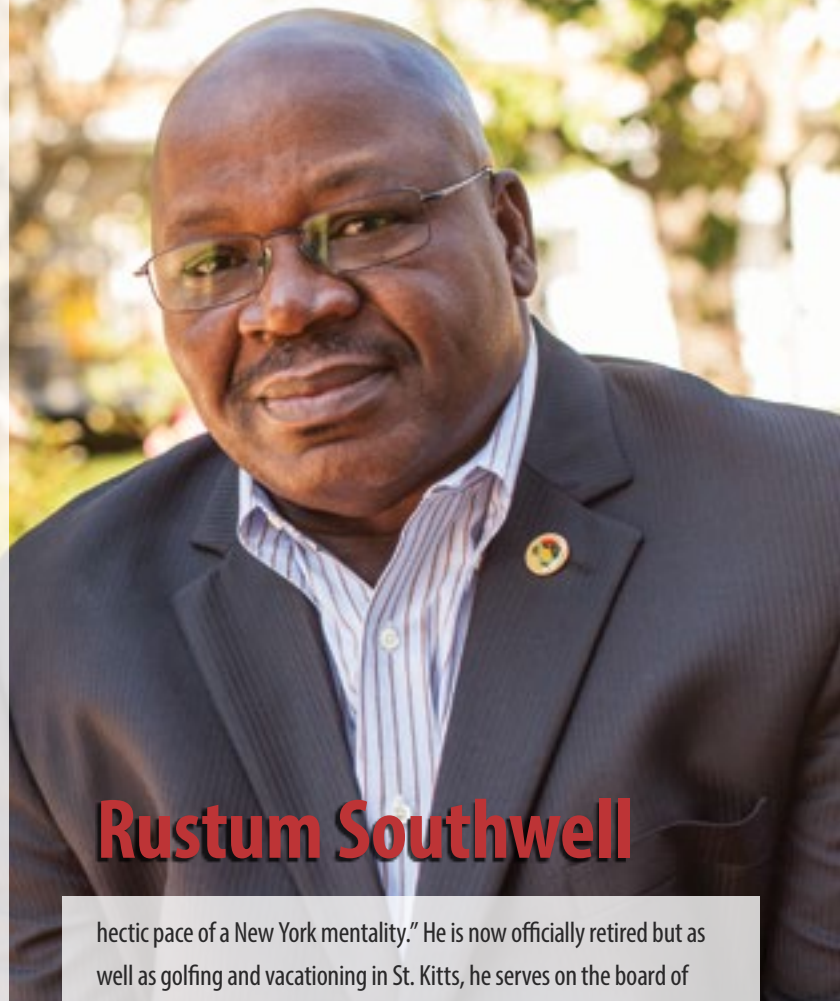
"I should be homegrown by now as I've spent two thirds of my life here," says Rustum Southwell, referring to his 1972 move to Halifax from St. Kitts in the British West Indies. "I've had times when I've felt as a total outsider and times I've felt the warmth of embrace." Luckily for Nova Scotia, Rustum's love for the province kept him here, contributing greatly to our economic growth as Founding CEO of the Black Business Initiative (BBI) and to the volunteer sector.

Rustum went to school in Barbados, but because he wasn't doing well, his father's friend suggested sending him to Nova Scotia. He spent a year at Mount St. Vincent University and then studied science and psychology at Dalhousie. "In your 20s you can be a bit carefree. I didn't know how my future would end up." He spent his first summers working at the Algonquin Hotel in St. Andrews, New Brunswick.

In 1979, along with other Caribbean students, Rustum decided to stay. That year his father, the prominent trade unionist and Premier of St. Kitts, died suddenly at 66. Rustum now regarded his future more seriously and thought he should engage his business acumen learned at home selling produce. So he managed a CARA food outlet in Dartmouth which quickly became the most successful in Canada. The BBI then became his "lifetime work." He helped design programs, hire staff and make strategic plans. He was aware of being an outsider. "In the beginning you felt some people in your own community wanted you to fall on your face. Only when there was significant progress, people came on side." He worked on most major projects in the Black community – a museum for Black Loyalists in Shelburne, the Black Cultural Centre and African NS Music Awards. He's proud of BBI's work, creating over 200 companies, providing over 700 jobs. He also sat on the Nova Scotia Community College board for six years and participated in the United Way and the Waterfront Development Corporation Limited.

Although Rustum could have joined friends and relatives in bigger centres, Halifax suits him. "I don't need the

**It's so satisfying to know I've made a difference.**



## Rustum Southwell

hectic pace of a New York mentality." He is now officially retired but as well as golfing and vacationing in St. Kitts, he serves on the board of Black Loyalists, works on Halifax Chamber of Commerce committees and chairs Hope Blooms, a community garden enterprise.

Rustum's wife, a Saint Mary's commerce graduate who immigrated in 1976, has retired from management at Aliant. Two sons live at home. Rustum is from a family of eleven including two older brothers who played on St. Kitts National Soccer Team, but his sports prowess was cricket. Rustum wrote a book about his father and returned to St. Kitts to celebrate what would have been his 100th birthday. He admits he never made much of his father's accomplishments. "I always thought I should do it on my own. I didn't want to spin off on someone else's achievements." But he accepts that his roots greatly affected his life's path. "It's so satisfying to know I've made a difference."

Unni Simensen is a legend in the Halifax food scene as creator of Scanway Catering and Restaurant as well as Sweet Basil, Cheapside at the Nova Scotia Art Gallery, Sweet Treats at Neptune Theatre (where she first sold her delicious Florentines) and most recently, Saege. “It was a lot of hard work. I’d often be in the kitchen at 4 am and then run home to be a mom.” She survived three recessions and once employed 150 people.

**I got to live my life’s passion.**

Unni came to Nova Scotia in 1978 after 10 years in Montreal. She and husband Ragnar had left their native Norway intending to stay a couple of years. “We were young, we wanted to travel and see the world. We had no money and slept on the floor for the first year.” Ragnar found work as an engineer; Unni hitchhiked to work as a nanny to three children, and then stayed home when their two children were born. She learned to speak fluent English and passable French. They loved Montreal’s art scene and the city’s humanity – a Jewish doctor operated on their ill son for free because of his appreciation for Norway’s efforts during the war.

When Ragnar was offered a job in Halifax, they took the plunge. “In today’s busy world, it’s a little old-fashioned and not too hectic.” She found people to be kind and enjoyed being near the ocean – something she’d missed in Montreal. Unni decided to start a catering company. She had taken cooking courses in Norway and her mother was a fabulous chef who was employed as a cook for a large household (where she met Unni’s father who was the gardener). “I knocked on a few restaurant doors and told them I make better desserts than they do!” They soon realized that was true and Unni’s career took off. Son Geir now operates her business, while daughter Kari currently travels the world with her husband and two children.

Life changed in 2013 when Ragnar, her beloved husband of 47 years, died after a long illness. Kari and family had moved in with them while he was sick and they’ve remained while Unni lives in an

independent part of the house. Although officially retired, she bakes for people and consults in the local food scene. She travels, walks, bikes and enjoys her fabulous flower gardens. She offers life skills cooking classes for Autism Nova Scotia. Unni always supported the community, donating time and food. She recalls the difficult time after 9/11 when her team pulled together meals for a thousand people. “I’ve never baked so many chocolate cakes.”

She thinks hard when asked if there were barriers to overcome as an immigrant. “I don’t think so.” She came from a peaceful, prosperous country that people don’t generally leave, and knows, unlike many immigrants, she could always go back. But Nova Scotia is home. She has catered birthday parties, weddings and funerals for the same families. “I’ve followed the whole circle of life. I’ve been very lucky. I got to live my life’s passion.”



**Unni Simensen**

Flamenco dancer Maria Osende has blessed the stages of Halifax with a bit of exotic Spain. The multi-talented Maria is also an artistic director, teacher and choreographer. "From very early on I knew I wanted to dance," says the native of Madrid, a city with a national ballet where dancers are held in high esteem. "It was not easy to make a living from dance in Halifax; the perception often is that it's not a real profession." But Maria persevered and now directs her own successful business – the Maria Osende Flamenco Dance Company.

She was well-traveled before her 2003 arrival in Halifax with her husband and three children. At 15 she danced with the National Ballet of Spain; at 17 Maria received a Fulbright Scholarship to New York's School of American Ballet; and at 19 she joined the Berlin Opera Ballet and ended up staying in Germany for 12 years. There she met her Canadian-born husband who had moved from London to work as an architect following the collapse of the Berlin Wall. They had twin girls, Adriana and Julia, and a son, Alex. During that time she returned to Spain for a year to study dance.

Her husband was offered a teaching position at Dalhousie, and Maria wasn't optimistic about Halifax. "But I loved it right away! Wow, this place is so beautiful and everyone is so nice." They arrived just before Hurricane Juan and neighbours fed them for a week. "People were like, who is this dancer from Spain and an architect from Berlin? I felt people were excited we were here. I felt a desire for us to stay." Maria still misses big city life but she returns regularly to Spain for professional development and to visit her parents and two siblings. Canada is home, and except for the weather, she likes it. The culture, however, is challenging for the self-described "fiery" Spaniard. "It's a daily effort – the politeness and how everyone says how great you are. It's nice but I was brought up differently – not with so many compliments!"

She started working here by teaching her neighbours and participating in a fundraiser which attracted attention from the dance community. She was then recommended for a teaching position. "That's how it works here. You always need a connection." She taught weekly for "Nova Dance Studio" in St. Margaret's Bay Community Centre and Maritime

Dance Academy before going solo. Many of her students, she explains, are women at a crossroads in their lives. "They find flamenco so empowering." Maria performs at multicultural festivals and theatres throughout the country and for five years she has served as the only non-Canadian volunteer board member of the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council.

Maria enjoys family life. The children no longer speak German but can converse in Spanish. "Kids adapt easily. And this is a better country for kids; childhood extends longer here." She notes with a chuckle that they are more interested in paddling and horses than dancing. The area's potential keeps her here. "There is no real flamenco culture here but people appreciate it a lot more now. There are wonderful resources, an interesting crowd of different communities. I'm excited to be part of that."

**I felt people  
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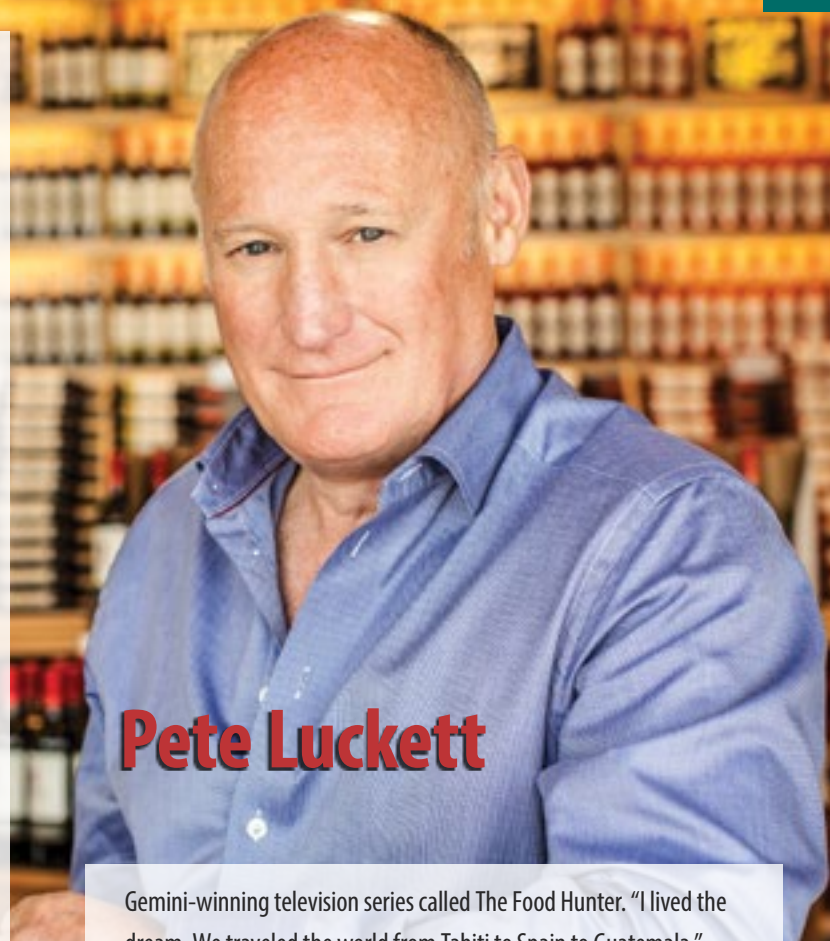
**Maria Osende**

Pete's Frootique; The Food Hunter television series; Lockett's Vineyards; three cookbooks; overseas food tours, public presentations – the list of accomplishments for a grocer from England who now employs 500 people is seemingly endless. As a Boy Scout, Pete Lockett developed an interest in travel and adventure that would serve him well. He started working at 15, and eventually operated a small business. At 25 he sold it and hit the road. "I got out at the right time. It was the last of the era of small British greengrocers." Pete ended up in Texas, but says his grocery background allowed him to immigrate to Canada. In Alberta, he operated a tree skidder, driving logs out of the woods, worked nights in a bar and erected real estate signs.

"I had a dream of owning a farm, living off the land and being self-sufficient," says Pete, explaining his 1981 move to Saint-Antoine, New Brunswick. A year later the farm failed and Pete was down to his last \$300. Impressed that the country's oldest farmers' market was in Saint John, he obtained a 12-foot bench for \$12 a week selling for a local wholesaler. With his top hat, tails, green shoes and green bowtie, a true character was born. It was a quiet market until Pete started shouting to sell his wares. One day his gregarious nature caused a scuffle, but the ensuing news coverage was a stroke of good luck. He talked food on CBC Television's *Midday*, becoming known for his farewell tip of his hat and a "toodleedo." The gig lasted 14 years before he moved to CTV for eight years.

Family members joined him as they expanded to three retail locations as well as selling wholesale. "Saint John was an incredible place to start from nothing. I was accepted by the people and built a business." After 10 years he sold it to family, moved to Nova Scotia and opened Pete's Frootique in Bedford. He became an in-demand speaker, making presentations about entrepreneurship. "Not in a million years did I think I'd do that." His career highlight was hosting a 19-episode

**I built a business  
one customer at  
a time.**



**Pete Lockett**

Gemini-winning television series called *The Food Hunter*. "I lived the dream. We traveled the world from Tahiti to Spain to Guatemala."

Pete lives with his wife Sue on a farm in the Annapolis Valley near his latest venture — Lockett Vineyards. "I never lost that bug to farm." He describes himself as "pretty grounded," but still travels the world to speak and lead wine tours. He once raced motorcycles and still loves to ride. And he belongs to a 10-man monthly cooking club. Two of his six children work with him. His five grandchildren, from three to 11, live in England.

Pete never encountered obstacles although he found the bureaucracy frustrating. "It wasn't always easy, but you forget the tough times. I built a business one customer at a time. I love being on the front lines talking to people. That's what gives me joy."



## Louis Coutinho

Louis Coutinho's path in Nova Scotia has led him from pushing grocery carts through the snow, to becoming Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for the Town of Windsor and a very active and committed volunteer.

Louis, who is a Portuguese-East Indian, was raised in Uganda. The family moved to the capital, Kampala, after the death of his father, a tea businessman, when Louis was nine. President Idi Amin's reign of terror drove Louis, then 19, his mother and three younger brothers to Canada in 1972. Along with thousands of refugees, they arrived in Montreal and were housed at a military barracks at Pointe Longue where there was information about the provinces. "No one was at the booths for the Atlantic Provinces. Let's go there, I told my mother."

Right away they felt they made the right decision. "The church groups, IODE and Salvation Army were all tripping over each other to be helpful to us." The first week he found a job at a grocery

store. "It was a bit of a shock here for us. But people see you with the wrong footwear in the snow and they'd help you." An Immigration staff member called the family daily and they were given a loan. "We wanted to get jobs as soon as possible to pay it back." While his mother worked as a dish washer and his brothers went to school, Louis found a second job managing apartment buildings. He soon started a science program at Dalhousie University. He was capable academically, as he had studied in the British system, but found it socially difficult. It was impossible to keep a job and study, so he left university until later in life.

Louis became a traffic analyst with the City of Halifax and rose through the ranks in the Halifax Regional Municipality— with help from mentors – to become Director of Human Resources. He also returned to Dalhousie to pursue his Master of Public Administration studies. In 2006 he became Windsor's CAO. He has served on provincial committees including as co-chair of a Provincial Fiscal Review. His community work has included GYRO Club president, Rotary Club president, King's-Edgehill School board member, Glooscap First Nation Economic Development Committee member and Board Director of the Windsor Area Education Fund Association. Most recently, Louis was elected as a board member to the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA) for Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. "We contribute any way we can. I am proud to be part of the Windsor community." Louis' wife works in banking, as do their two sons. They have two grandchildren – twin boys.

**I am proud to be a part of the Windsor community.**

It was challenging for Louis' mother to settle in Canada, but she worked at CanPlan and Sears and was a Red Cross volunteer for 35 years. One brother manages a dairy company in Hamilton, while the other operates a store in Northern Canada. The third died of illness. Because of bad memories, Louis never returned to Uganda although a part of him wants to show his sons where he was born. Nova Scotia is certainly home; he loves the outdoors where he enjoys birding. "I didn't experience any barriers living in Nova Scotia; what I saw was a community that wanted to help. Trust me; Canada is the land of opportunity."



Leaving your neighbourhood and school is challenging for a young person, let alone moving to another continent, but that's what happened to Nina Maric at 12 when she and her family left their small town in then-dangerous Bosnia for Canada. "It was a big new world of adventures," says Nina. "It was very exciting for me. I was young enough to cross over any barriers. I had good family support." She found everything amazing, including grocery shopping: "An entire aisle of cereal! Wow!"

Starting junior high school wasn't easy. "It was awkward at the beginning, trying to find my place," says the outgoing Nina. While she spoke English, it wasn't perfect so she soon learned the skill of memorization which allowed her to make better marks than many Canadian-born students. Schoolwork, especially math, was easier than in her homeland. Before long she felt comfortable. "I felt Canadian in high school once I started to see it wasn't that difficult to have friends. I got involved in plays and choir as I did at home. Everyone was very welcoming."

Nina went on to study political science at Dalhousie University, but through King's College. "As a person I was rediscovering myself and understanding the world. King's professors were unique and challenging." After graduating she traveled to Europe on her own and visited her homeland. She has been there several times including a trip with her Croatian-born husband to meet each other's families. She enjoys visiting but finds the country small with limited choices. "We have more opportunities here. We can do whatever we want as long as we roll up our sleeves and do the work." Her family has also settled well – her parents work at ISANS, while her sister works in Toronto.

Nina worked in retail and administration and then took a challenging one-year program in public relations at the Nova Scotia Community College. After doing freelance public relations and "temp work" at Saint

## When people ask where I'm from I say Canada.

Mary's University, she was hired as a recruitment officer, a combination of communications and recruitment. One year later she became Saint Mary's Online and On-campus Recruitment Coordinator, a job she says is perfect for her. Nina has been there for seven years, and has just returned from maternity leave for the birth of her first child, Luka.

Nina is content living in Halifax – she appreciates her calm suburb and also her ability to navigate the city easily. "There are cultural activities, lots of different cuisines, the vibe is great, but winters are long." Nina is still fluent in Serbo-Croatian, and meets regularly with friends from her homeland, but says this definitely is home. "I don't feel like an immigrant. I feel very Canadian. When people ask where I'm from I say Canada." And it doesn't hurt that she just loves her job. "I have the best job in the world. I am fortunate to love to go to work."



**Nina Maric**

A visit to a school in a small city on the Yangtze River during a recent trip to China compelled Dr. Orlando Hung to contemplate his success.

Orlando is an anesthesiologist at the QEII Health Sciences Centre, Medical Director of Research in the Anesthesia Department, a Dalhousie University professor and an inventor of drug delivery systems and medical devices.

"I became emotional as I was one of those kids many years ago," he recalls. "I said to myself, I never expected to have the life I have today. What was the turning point? It was education."

Orlando, who was born in Macau, a former Portuguese colony in China, says a Jesuit priest urged his father to send the children to high school in Hong Kong for a better education. "I wasn't the best student," Orlando confesses. "I was playing soccer, playing in a rock band, riding motorcycles and not doing much studying!" But after graduating in 1975 he was sent to Saint Mary's University in Halifax, a former Jesuit university.

Orlando encountered culture shock and language challenges, but was determined to take advantage of the opportunity. He studied pharmacy, partly on scholarship, and then medicine. Most of his 11 siblings also came to Canada, settling in Toronto and Edmonton. Almost all have post-graduate degrees.

As a student, Orlando worked shelving books at the medical library. Although he was offered an internship in the U.S. he accepted one here instead. After his marriage and completion of his anesthesia training at Dalhousie, he accepted a research fellowship in pharmacology at Stanford University. "They had a huge lab and offered me a job." But a California earthquake was not part of the plan, so he and Jeanette packed up with their two boys and returned to Halifax. "I had moved so often, it didn't bother me to move again."

Orlando works three days a week in the operating room and two days on research. He and a colleague invented a way to deliver pain medication through the lungs in 1995, and in 2008 Orlando and his colleagues patented a monitor that sounds an alarm when the Intravenous (IV) bag

**I am learning every day.**

is empty during surgery. "In the last 10 years I've spent more and more energy inventing medical devices. I have many ideas." Although he would likely have more success, more quickly, had he stayed at Stanford, he is content. "I think Canada is actually wonderful, because you're judged on your own merits; I am a living example of that."

Orlando loves the Nova Scotia environment. He and Jeanette, coordinator of Dalhousie's career counselling service, live in a condo on the Northwest Arm so she can kayak and he can play tennis. Their children, a nurse and two paramedics, live in Nova Scotia and hope to stay. Orlando was active in the Chinese Association and now volunteers with the Global Outreach Program. He and two of his children spent a month in Rwanda teaching anesthesia and pre-hospital care medicine in 2013, and again in July 2015, something he hopes to continue.

Orlando has greatly contributed to his adopted home with his work, research and inventions. And he's not finished yet. "Education is a continuum. I am learning every day."



**Orlando Hung**

Soon after coming to Halifax in 1988 Elfinesh Zewde and her husband ran into a fellow Ethiopian. She saw it as a good sign. “We were so happy. He took us to see another Ethiopian family. God is taking care of us, I thought.” Elfinesh, now Senior Financial Reporting Accountant at the Workers’ Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB), found the early days challenging. “Oh my goodness I missed my family. You see new faces, new weather; it was so windy, everything was new. You feel foreign.” She did find people kind. “It’s a welcoming city.”

Elfinesh had lived in Kenya for two years studying computer programming and English. There she met her husband who had come from India to study. He was offered a Dalhousie scholarship through World University Services of Canada (WUSC) and Windle Trust, so they moved here. A Windle sponsorship allowed Elfinesh to take a one-year diploma course at the Halifax Business Academy. “I arrived one day and went to school the next. They welcomed me.” During March Break she worked at the front desk of Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia – “My first job in Canada!” After graduation she found a temporary position with the city and then an insurance company. “I jumped into anything as I wanted experience.”

Once Elfinesh had a full-time job she sponsored her mother and several siblings. One brother remains in Nova Scotia while her mother, five brothers and two sisters work in Calgary. “They tell us to come there but I’m happy here. I can raise my kids without exposing them to big city problems.” She knows she could earn more there but says, “I love my job at WCB; it’s the best place to work; my income is good enough.” Her children are now 22, 20 and 14. Bruke studies biology and psychology at Saint Mary’s and Henoch is doing computer science and mathematics at Waterloo. Sarah is in grade eight and an avid soccer player.

Elfinesh left her insurance position to study at Saint Mary’s full time, graduating with a business degree in accounting and finance. She also did her Certified General Accountant (CGA), professional designation, graduating in 2010 with the honour of

**Just jump in;  
you never  
know what  
will happen.**



## Elfinesh Zewde

being chosen valedictorian. She worked for the Black Business Initiative, Air Canada and Clearwater before joining WCB. “I took a risk to go to school and it worked well.” Her husband graduated with his Master’s in mechanical engineering at Dalhousie, but felt a calling to radio ministry.

Elfinesh was treasurer and chair of the Ethiopian Association of Nova Scotia and treasurer of the African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes. She also mentors university students. “It’s not like you’re living for yourself. We have to share our abilities and skills with other people.” Elfinesh has helped to sponsor refugees – all now successful citizens. “Doing something good for others who are in need is something that I inherited from my parents.”

She returned to Ethiopia with her children in 2011. “They loved it.” Her son returned for a month in 2014 as a hospital volunteer. “He had a wonderful experience. But when I go on vacation I miss Halifax.” Elfinesh encourages immigrants to be bold. “Think out of the box, see any opportunities. Just jump in; you never know what will happen.”

Because of Suha Masalmeh's determination to practice medicine in Nova Scotia, citizens of Cape Breton will have the services of a passionate, dedicated and skilled doctor. As a family medicine resident, Suha has been working at a community clinic and a local hospital since May 2013. She works with people of all ages, and provides both emergency and inpatient care.

As an internationally educated medical graduate it wasn't easy to practice here, but Suha collaborated with the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia and other organizations to create opportunities for internationally trained physicians to work in Nova Scotia.

Suha was born in Germany of Syrian parents. Political instability made it difficult to live and work in Syria so the family moved often. Suha came to Halifax in 1994 with her family. With a surgeon father and a nurse/midwife mother, medicine seemed a natural calling, so she went to Northern Syria to study medicine graduating from the six-year program in 2000.

She returned to Halifax with the hope to start her postgraduate medical education. After a few years of hard work she could not enter a residency program. Suha wanted to pursue both medicine and management. Since the road to medicine was filled with obstacles at that time, she decided to pursue a career in management. She went to Dalhousie for a Master of Health Administration degree instead.

Still determined to work as the doctor she was meant to be, Suha re-entered medical school, graduating in 2013. "It was repetitive but I missed working with patients," she says. Canada is the most difficult country for internationally

**This will help  
build the  
Canadian  
economy.**



**Suha Masalmeh**

trained professionals in that it demands re-schooling rather than probation. "I didn't expect it to be that hard. This needs to be changed to a better system where we are able to better integrate the skills of immigrants to become active members of the society. This will help build the Canadian economy."

Suha's husband is an internationally trained pediatrician. Like many internationally trained physicians, he was not able to work as a physician in Canada. He is currently enrolled in the Master of Counselling program at Acadia University. "You have to fish for opportunities, nothing will be handed to you easily," says Suha, adding that he hasn't abandoned working as a physician.

Dr. Heizer Marval is a busy and accomplished psychiatrist at a sleep disorders clinic in Dartmouth. The idea to move to Canada came during a two-month visit to Halifax in 1999 to study English. A conversation with an immigrant from China planted a seed in his brain. "People move here? I was surprised, and in those days Venezuelans were not leaving the country."

**It has been interesting, challenging and rewarding.**

He completed medical school in Venezuela and arrived in Halifax in 2002 with his mother and brother to join his sister who was a Dalhousie University student. "Difficult and unpredictable," is how he describes his first days. Heizer couldn't practice medicine here and didn't know what to do. "There was stress, struggle and sadness," he admits, but he persevered. "Family is important to me and I wanted to stay. I gave myself two years as a mark." Also, since Venezuela had become unsafe, returning was not an option.

But he connected with Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) for the New Beginnings Workshop and English classes. Heizer worked with other physicians to form the Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia to help professionals overcome barriers. "We did advocacy with the Department of Health; we taught people about their options."

While offering volunteer computer skills at Connections Clubhouse, a mental health support program, he decided to pursue psychiatry. "I've always been interested in the brain."

He entered the residency program at Dalhousie which included work in Saint John, New Brunswick, Boston and Mexico, allowing him to compare psychiatric services. Heizer graduated in 2010 and is now in his challenging position at the sleep clinic. "I work with people who sleep too much, cannot sleep, or do things while they're sleeping that they shouldn't." He enjoys the challenge of practicing psychiatry and finds less stigma here than in Venezuela. "People at home aren't as integrated in the community. It's more hopeful here."

Heizer met his wife, a Saskatchewan native, at an ISANS seminar on healthcare services for immigrants. She is an occupational therapist at the North End Clinic. His mother works for the Province while his sister, who has two children, works in IT for the Liquor Commission. His brother works for a bank in Toronto. Heizer has considered moving west to be close to his wife's family, but feels rooted and even finds the weather bearable. "It's a small, friendly place. It's close in terms of our ability to travel home." He also appreciates air travel connections to visit friends in Spain.

Heizer works regular hours but studies at night to keep abreast of changes in his field. "Usually life is too busy to take time to think about it, but sometimes I feel more integrated than others," he says, explaining that once he decided to stay, he felt settled. "I think things have been good in terms of adapting to a new environment and growing and trying to give back. I'm feeling grateful of people who helped me. It has been interesting, challenging and rewarding."



**Heizer Marval**

Marty Janowitz's journey to Nova Scotia began with a youthful, "completely ridiculous" idea to buy farmland with his future first wife Gina. There was no purchase, but that 1969 trip proved prophetic. The native New Yorker graduated in sociology from Boston's Brandeis University, later intending to teach school. He and Gina became students of Buddhism and moved to Boulder, Colorado, in 1971, to study with Tibetan teacher Trungpa Rinpoche, where Marty became the first executive director of Naropa Institute (now University) at 23.

In 1975 Rinpoche announced that, to thrive, the Buddhist community must move its centre. The new home should not be so materialistic, with a strong sense of values and lineage, fundamental decency and a natural connection to the US and Europe. Marty and Gina suggested Nova Scotia. "Trungpa had an immediate intuitive feeling that this was a compelling, unique place." As a primary aide, Marty helped Rinpoche settle here. In 1987 when Rinpoche became terminally ill, Marty moved here full time with his second wife Susanna. Having trained as a gemologist, he worked at a jewelry store before starting an appraisal business.

But he was searching for more. "I wanted to work in something around social good in concert with my spiritual motivation, and support my family." With Susanna's encouragement, Marty became executive-director of Clean Nova Scotia, an environmental education organization. To improve his credentials and experience he enrolled in Dalhousie University's Master's of Environmental Studies program. He was also father to three children and a part-time advertising copywriter. In his six years at Clean Nova Scotia, staff grew from three to 18 and the organization was soon on the cutting edge of change with its collaborative sustainable community approach. Marty worked with the Province to develop a beverage container policy and chair the waste management public consultations leading to pioneering policies and programs. He guided the award-winning Beach Sweeps and creation of Waste Reduction Week.

Marty took his impressive record to the environmental/engineering consulting firm Jacques Whitford as National Operations Manager for their

**We're part of something important...**

new environment division, leading the firm's evolution as a leader in sustainable practices. When Stantec acquired Jacques Whitford, he became Vice-President of Sustainability. Energetic Marty volunteered as president of Nova Scotia Nature Trust and GPI Atlantic, and chair of Authentic Leadership in Action and the Nova Scotia Round Table on Environment and Sustainable Prosperity.

"I'm focused on how change occurs." Still a committed Buddhist, he teaches meditation regularly at home and internationally.

Marty has resisted opportunities to move. "In our own humble and complicated way, and despite obstacles, Nova Scotia has every possibility of becoming an exemplary example of what a decent society could be." Marty is committed to helping that happen – "but not to the point of feeling guilty if we're not here all winter," referring to their second home in Belize. Most Buddhist community members remain here and are successful. "We're part of something important, if challenging, and share in generating ideas that are worthwhile to this society." He still feels like an immigrant. "But I'm one with some sort of DNA connection. I feel like I'm rediscovering my true home rather than having landed in a foreign place."



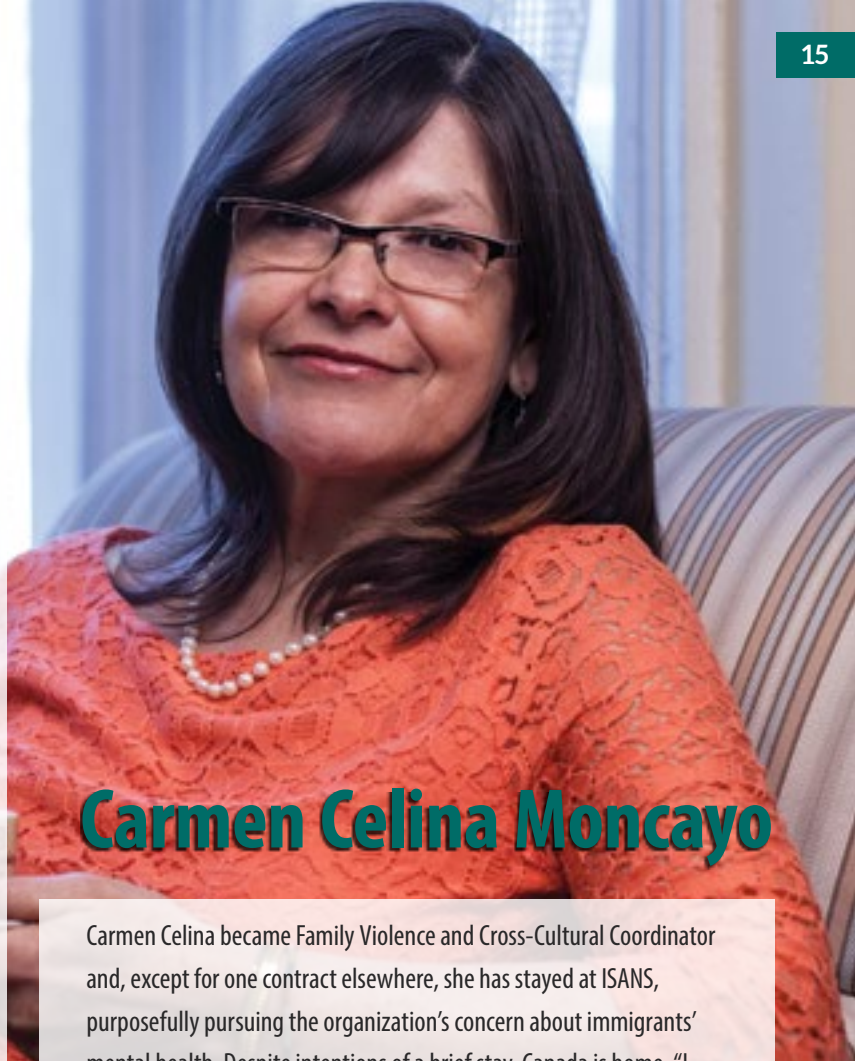
**Marty Janowitz**

Carmen Celina Moncayo was a community psychologist in her native Colombia before coming to Canada, where she uses those skills as ISANS Community Wellness Project Coordinator. A highlight of her work was the recent community mental health assessment. “I was so touched by the stories – in terms of suffering, but also in terms of people’s resilience.”

Carmen Celina landed here in 1999 with daughter Violeta, then 12, for a break from the political upheaval at home where she’d worked in the Ombudsman’s office. “I left by choice but I had no other option.” She knew that although she didn’t speak English, her two brothers in Canada, one in Nova Scotia, would help her. “If I compared my experience with people who didn’t have any connections, it was easy. You need friends to help you navigate.” Over the next while the energetic and passionate Carmen Celina volunteered at ISANS organizing resources; assisted a professor researching a women’s health project; worked in a Guatemalan handicrafts shop; attended gatherings about women’s health issues; studied English; presented her thesis research project at Saint Mary’s University; volunteered with the Canadian Mental Health Association; joined the Halifax Immigrant Women’s Association; coordinated conversation groups and became a School Settlement Worker at the YMCA.

But it was difficult for Carmen Celina to live in the moment. “I was either in the future, perfectly integrated in society with a house, car, everything – or in the past where I had professional status, friends, a woman in control.” With two Master’s degrees, returning to school to practice psychology here was not tempting. “We have naïve ideas of how it will be, but without them we wouldn’t immigrate. We never realize how overwhelming it is not to be able to communicate and convey complex thoughts.”

**I’m so grateful to do this work.**



## Carmen Celina Moncayo

Carmen Celina became Family Violence and Cross-Cultural Coordinator and, except for one contract elsewhere, she has stayed at ISANS, purposefully pursuing the organization’s concern about immigrants’ mental health. Despite intentions of a brief stay, Canada is home. “I love Nova Scotia because I have met people with whom I have created communities with diverse interests. I have friends that supported my daughter and me.” Carmen Celina remarried and lives in a co-op where she also volunteers. Joining a neighbourhood knitting group made her feel part of the community. She drums with Samba Nova and meditates at Shambhala. Violeta attends NSCAD and makes jewelry.

Carmen Celina believes settlement is an endless process. “There are moments I feel totally settled and moments where I’m a newcomer again.” She loves that her job allows her to make a difference. “I’m so grateful to do this work. As we say in Spanish, I’m completely in my salsa!”


 A portrait of Barbara Harsanyi, an elderly woman with short, wavy grey hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a white t-shirt and a red beaded necklace. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a blue and gold patterned wall.
 

## Barbara Harsanyi

Dr. Barbara Harsanyi's distinguished dental career in Halifax began when she came here in 1970 as an assistant professor in oral pathology, the study of the nature and causes of oral disease. She retired from Dalhousie's Faculty of Dentistry 25 years later as a full professor, having taught students in dentistry, dental hygiene and oral surgery, and occasionally medical students and dental assistants. Barbara also did research and participated in case presentations with local general pathologists. She cared for dental patients, starting a "mouth clinic" to involve students in the diagnoses and treatment of serious conditions such as cancer. Even after retirement, Barbara taught dental hygienists part-time and made presentations. "Halifax felt wonderful, peaceful," says Barbara, who was an assistant professor at Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry in Tennessee.

Her contributions to Nova Scotia went beyond work. Through the Universalist Unitarian Church she organized resettlement of a Vietnamese refugee family and helped settle an Afghani refugee family, including hiring two members to assist her ailing mother. She also assisted a Transylvanian

**It was like coming home.**

Hungarian refugee family. Barbara's need to help grew from her own experience during World War II. She vividly recalls the horror of the bombing and her family's frightening escape from Hungary to Germany. In 1952, thanks to the International Refugee Organization, Barbara, her mother and younger sister sailed from Italy to Colombia to join relatives. On board she met Alex Kulnys – soon her first husband. As musicians they chose to live in Ibaguè – the music capital of Colombia – and Bogota, where there was a national symphony. Daughter Daina was born while Barbara studied dentistry. Restrictions on their US visa meant leaving before graduation. They stayed with friends in Chicago until she found work in international sales promotion. Alex worked also, but the marriage crumbled.

Barbara returned to Colombia with her mother and daughter to complete her degree, practice dentistry and teach. She met Hungarian artist Fedor L. Harsanyi, then returned with him to the US as civil marriage was impossible in Colombia. After working a short while as a research assistant at the University of Oregon School of Dentistry, she obtained a scholarship to specialize in oral pathology leading to her work in Tennessee and Halifax. "I found friends here but mostly they were other 'come-from-aways,'" she recalls. Fedor worked as an architectural draftsman but died of a brain tumour at 55 during Barbara's sabbatical year studying for a Canadian dental degree permitting her to treat patients. "It was a dismal year trying to be a student again while caring for a dying husband. With the help of friends, I did it," she says proudly, noting that she graduated with advanced standing in 1977, shortly after Fedor's death.

Now fully retired, Barbara is still active in her church and music. "Music has always been an emotional outlet for me." Barbara has dealt with tragedy – daughter Daina also died – but she has found solace. "My job kept me here, my daughter lived here; my grandchildren were born here." She also has extended family through husband Rodney Vaughan. "A trip to Hungary made me realize that is the past. I saw the woods and lakes of Nova Scotia from the plane. It was like coming home."



Francis Fares is a name associated with success, most recently as creator of the impressive King's Wharf development on the Dartmouth waterfront. The prominent land developer was celebrated as "Lebanese Business Person of the Year" by the Canadian-Lebanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2012. "The area is on the verge of exploding economically and culturally," says Francis. He feels Halifax should better exploit its positive attributes – such as its accessibility to Central Canada, New York and Europe. He also feels strongly that our artists need to be celebrated. "The soul of a place is its art and culture."

**We should all  
celebrate success.**

Francis' long journey here was indirect. He was determined to leave war-torn Lebanon to join several aunts and cousins in Halifax. But getting a student visa was difficult so he moved to Rome and studied art and theatre for six years. Despite the exotic setting, and the opportunity to work in the Vatican Museum, Halifax remained his goal. In 1989, on his ninth attempt at a visa, he was finally permitted to immigrate.

"I took any job I could get," says Francis, reminiscing about cleaning greasy grills in a fish and chips joint and baking and delivering pizzas – all at minimum wage. "It was a hard time but there's no word for failure in my vocabulary. I had to make it one way or another." He saw a newspaper ad for real estate sales, took the course three times until he passed, and became an agent. "I started selling real estate and never looked back." The forward-thinking Francis lived cheaply in a basement apartment putting his earnings toward buying real estate. In 1995 he formed his own company and a year later jumped into development by buying a large chunk of land, subdividing it and selling lots to Germans known for their affection for Nova Scotia.

Francis felt welcomed here especially after dealing with racism in Europe. "This was a breath of fresh air." As many immigrants before him, he was guided along the way. "A lot of people helped me; even people I didn't

know well. I'm the kind of guy who will ask for help." He completed the Executive Master of Business Administration program at Saint Mary's University and later served on its Board of Governors. Last year, he was chair of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce.

He travels frequently with his wife and two boys, but Halifax will always be home. "I like this place; I like the pace of life." He encounters newcomers who can't wait to go home and encourages them to adapt. "You miss your family and certain food and the weather, but you can't have it all." Francis describes himself as a workaholic but he finds time for golfing and sailing, and puttering in his garden, greenhouse and orchard, and tending to his bees, roosters and hens. "I came from nothing and I have a successful business and I am happy. My success is everyone's success. We should all celebrate success."



**Francis Fares**

Alexandre Pavlovski has made a difference to life in Nova Scotia as a founder of Green Power Labs, a thriving solar energy company.

Alexandre, an applied scientist and entrepreneur, immigrated here from St. Petersburg, Russia, at 44. “I was asking myself some questions. What shall I do next? One idea was in the realm of clean energy.” Alexandre had graduated with his doctorate from the esteemed St. Petersburg Polytechnic University, focusing on green energy – then an emerging field. He further developed his ideas in Central Europe with a colleague who also eventually made Nova Scotia his home. “Moving here was attractive to me at that particular stage of my life.” He could see that Nova Scotia has much to offer – the ocean, the academic centres and the strong Information Technology infrastructure. And the province has incredibly strong sources of green energy – wind, sun and tides. “You’d have to search hard globally to find such a combination.”

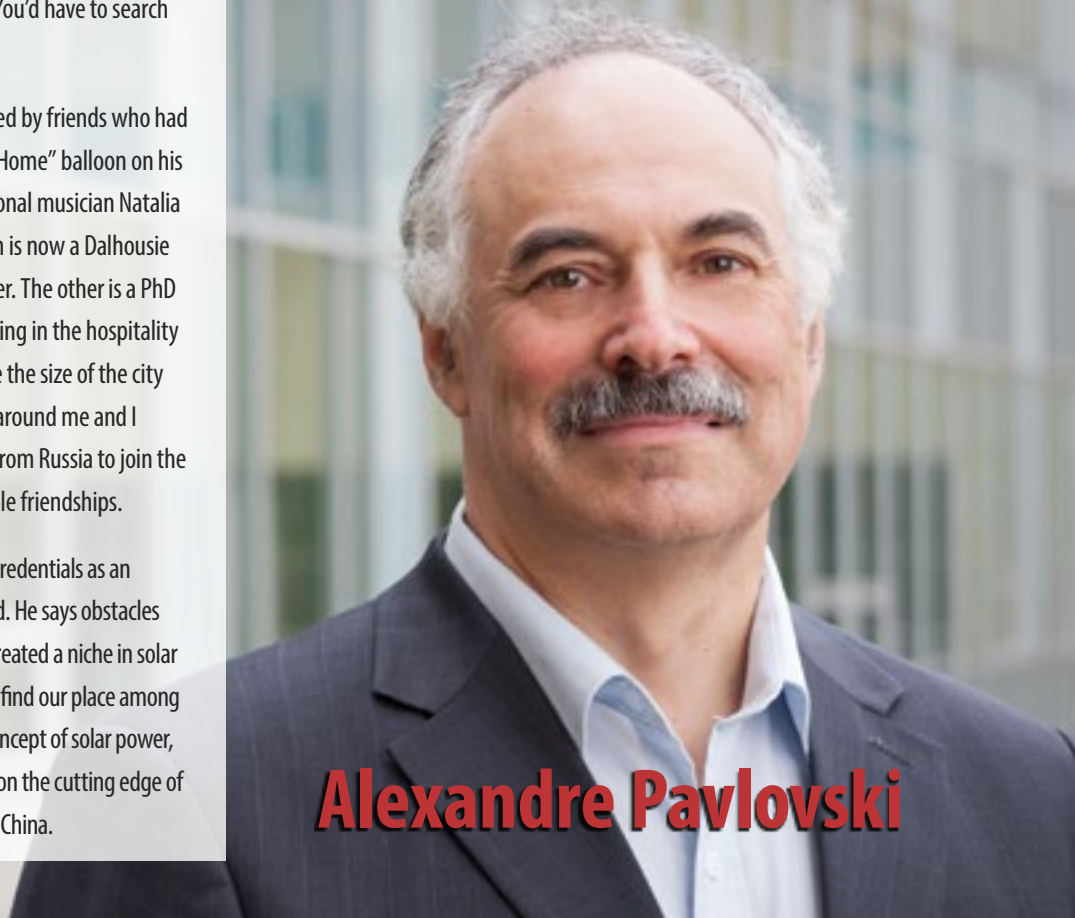
He remembers his arrival well as he was welcomed by friends who had moved here earlier. There was even a “Welcome Home” balloon on his house. He was accompanied by his wife, professional musician Natalia Pavlovski, and their sons, then 13 and 14. One son is now a Dalhousie graduate working as a neuroscientist in Vancouver. The other is a PhD candidate in mathematics at Dalhousie and working in the hospitality industry. Halifax was appealing right away. “I like the size of the city and the proximity to the ocean. I like the people around me and I enjoy outdoor activities.” His mother emigrated from Russia to join the family, worked on her English and formed valuable friendships.

Alexandre had to write examinations to prove his credentials as an engineer – a significant step toward feeling settled. He says obstacles are expected when you try something new. “We created a niche in solar power management and then created a market to find our place among competitors. Many people were not open to the concept of solar power, but things started changing.” His company is now on the cutting edge of technology with offices in California, Australia and China.

**I’m excited  
about the  
value people  
bring.**

Alexandre was a member of the board of Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia for seven years including a stint as vice-chair.

He was part of the massive effort to address the roadblocks for internationally trained professionals to work here – including Canadians who study abroad. “I understood the challenges of professional people coming to Nova Scotia.” His own company is a good example, as among 20 employees are people from several countries including China, Japan, Serbia and Ukraine. “This is a foundation of our success. I’m excited about the value people bring.” Alexandre also chaired the energy advisory group for the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. “I wanted to know and understand people so I got involved in activities right away.” Although he occasionally returns to Russia to visit friends and colleagues, he is rooted here. “It’s been a great 13–year journey. I’m still on the journey exploring new grounds with my solid footing in Nova Scotia.”



**Alexandre Pavlovski**

# Sreejata Chatterjee

“Maybe a little bit brave and a little bit stupid,” says Sreejata Chatterjee, laughingly describing her move from her home of Calcutta, India, to Halifax in 2002. She was 18 and traveled with an old friend, but no family. It turned out to be a wise decision as Sreejata is now Chief Product Engineer of a company she started with three other immigrants called LeadSift, a software program that combs through Twitter and Facebook identifying and understanding consumers on social media. It’s already a success having received over \$1 million in investments. But, as Sreejata explains, the business needs to stand on its own with a strong customer base to sustain that success.

The work is a natural fit. “I wanted to get into programming since I was nine years old. It’s super logical,” she says. “And I always wanted to have my own business – it’s always been in the cards.” Sreejata found programming easy, a skill that brought admiration from other students. She wanted to study computer science outside of India and she’d read that Canada was among the best countries to live in. Sreejata earned her Bachelor of Computer Science degree at Dalhousie University, worked as a research assistant and in a consulting company, and enrolled in a Master of Computer Science program.

Upon her arrival in Halifax she thought she was in the “middle of nowhere,” but soon appreciated getting around easily and safely. Despite differences in cuisine, weather and customs – she recalls with a chuckle her surprise at not being allowed to wear scents in public – it wasn’t difficult to adapt to change. “Atlantic Canadians are so nice. People always helped me out.” Sreejata’s first language is Bengali, she studied English in school and “picked up Hindi.” Told she needed French in Canada, she took a four-month crash course before arriving. Sreejata works hard and hasn’t taken a vacation in over two years. Luckily her parents came to visit for several months, allowing her to indulge in familiar Indian food. She misses her native cuisine and recalls her first days here when she ate far too many hot dogs and chicken nuggets!

Sreejata grew up in a household of 12 people, including extended family. Her parents have graduate degrees in Biochemistry and her



father has established several companies in India. While they are proud of her success, they wish she was close by. Sreejata misses her parents and her sister. She says there are many reasons to stay here – beautiful ocean, nice people and safety – but perhaps one day she’ll have a company in both countries.

Sreejata has traveled in the region, and considers Newfoundland particularly spectacular. She has little free time but has taken up running. She has been a volunteer at Feed Nova Scotia and continues to volunteer as an instructor with Ladies Learning Code, a monthly workshop for women who want to learn programming. Hers is a busy, challenging and satisfying life. She’s only 31, so the best is yet to come.

**I always  
wanted to  
have my own  
business.**

When Alex Atiol was a student in Sudan, he learned that Canada was the “world’s fishing ground.” In 1993 he arrived here on a World University Services Canada (WUSC) sponsorship. “Other than that I didn’t know much,” he says, chuckling. Today the affable and committed Alex is well informed, as that’s part of his job as ISANS Coordinator of Orientation Services.

He graduated with his BA in Economics from Dalhousie, but financial sector job prospects were slim. He had been an accountant in Sudan and tutored English as a refugee in Kenya, so he volunteered at ISANS helping clients settle. He remembers the shock a new family felt seeing the seemingly endless grocery store choices. That concern and ability to get along with people led to a job with new arrivals. He created the ISANS orientation manual and a 10-unit

**Working with people has been my passion since I was a student.**

module to help them learn how society functions. “Working with people has been my passion since I was a student. I had gone through the experience myself and helping comes automatically.” He is especially proud of earning accreditation as a Dialogue for Peaceful Change facilitator. This international program features the best methodologies in community-based conflict mediation, focusing on conflict content, culture and spirituality.

Alex is emphatic about immigrants’ contributions. “We’re injecting new ideas; nothing will be lost.” His experience has been positive. He found Dalhousie to be “amazing” and worked at the library and with campus police while studying. “It didn’t take me long to feel part of society.” He later became active in the community -- ISANS representative in Partners for Human Rights, Atlantic representative on the National Anti-Racism Council, chair of the local Development and Peace committee, and member of the African Association of Nova Scotia and the Sudanese Association of Nova Scotia.

He speaks proudly of his family who helped pay off his student loan, allowing purchase of a house. “That is something I won’t forget.” His oldest daughter is in the Master of International Development program at Oxford University while two study economics at Dalhousie, one proceeding to law school. His son works with street children in Toronto and the youngest attends school. Alex is proud of their mother – an ISANS Life Skills Worker and Superstore cashier — who cared for them alone. He lived without them for three years, until he made friends who helped sponsor them.

Alex feels Halifax is a perfect size, has good schools and a strong sense of community. “ISANS is full of people eager to help and ISANS policies allow that. It’s not bureaucratic; we have a good and happy place. I say ‘we’ because I feel I am part of it.”



**Alex Atiol**

As her mother before her, Tuyet Nguyen always wanted to be a nurse. “My mom inspired me. She would have liked to become a nurse, but she married early and couldn’t make her dream come true so she passed it on to me.” Tuyet has a demanding and satisfying position at the Veterans’ Memorial Hospital in Halifax, a job that meant returning to high school to repeat grade 12. She’s a popular nurse who greatly contributes to the quality of health care in the province.

Tuyet’s story in Canada begins with an aunt who sponsored her father as one of the “Vietnamese Boat People” in 1985. He worked here and then in Toronto making car parts. Five years later the entire family – eight children from 17 to 28, including 24-year-old Tuyet — was reunited in Halifax. They lived with her aunt and her father drove a taxi. “Everything was strange,” recalls Tuyet. “I wasn’t able to open my mouth and say a word in English.” She had learned English grammar in Vietnam but had little vocabulary. “I was so shy doing groceries with my dad. I just listened. I was so homesick I would dream about Vietnam every night.”

She had completed high school in Vietnam but she couldn’t attend university because her father was a political prisoner, so she worked in a market. In Canada, she helped at her aunt’s Vietnamese restaurant. “My first impression of Canadians was as a waitress. Customers were so friendly and nice.” Tuyet participated in a job entry program and studied English at ISANS. “I told them I was interested in working in a hospital environment.” She received a four-month placement at the IWK maternity unit and was then hired as a “unit aide” taking care of stock for eight years before returning to school. “I was out of school so long I didn’t think I could do it.” Her efforts paid off and in 1995 she entered Dalhousie for her Bachelor of Science in Nursing. “It was so hard. I would take an hour to read one page with the dictionary beside me!” Five years later she graduated and earned the job she still has.

**I love my job.  
I love taking  
care of people.**



## Tuyet Nguyen

Life outside work is equally active as a divorced mother of two daughters, 12 and 9. One brother lives with her and helps out. Tuyet was on the executive of the Vietnamese Association of Nova Scotia and continues to attend functions. She volunteers teaching Vietnamese to children on Sundays, including her own. She also sings in a Vietnamese band and goes to the gym. Her daughters study dance and piano. Tuyet’s parents have retired in BC and would like her to join them. “Halifax is my hometown now. I can’t let go easily. Also, it would be hard to leave my co-workers after all this time. My work is important to me.”

Tuyet acknowledges that her journey has taken a lot of work and commitment. “When you’re in a situation like me you become strong in order to adapt. I love my job. I love taking care of people.”

A search for adventure brought Huiling Zhuang, along with her husband and baby Shuya, to Canada from her home in Qingdao, China, in 2003. "We were young. We just wanted to try new things and new opportunities." She and her husband, then both 28, studied English for two months in Vancouver, even though she had taught English as a Foreign Language in a university in China. "I needed to learn the culture," she explains.

They returned to China, and then immigrated to Halifax where she earned her Master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language, with a focus on curriculum studies, at Mount Saint Vincent University. While still a student, she received an ISANS work placement as an Educational Program Assistant at Pier 21. Her husband's work placement led to a fulfilling job at SoulutionInc, a telecommunications company that needed help entering the Chinese market.

Huiling's commitment to learning the nuances of the English language paid off, as a few months after graduation she became an instructor in the ISANS Family Learning Program. She now instructs English as an Additional Language (EAL), teaching a literacy class and a low-level mainstream English class with 15 to 20 students in each. "At the beginning it was challenging. I worked hard so that I would do my best." The cheerful and outgoing Huiling says she was thrilled to present to tutors of low-level English learners. "I was so happy to share with them. I could tell Canadians something!"

Her commitment extends also to her church where she started a program to teach Chinese language to Chinese children and, realizing that Chinese seniors were having difficulty learning English, designed a program and textbook for them. "I see the needs and I want to do something. I feel happy helping people." She now manages the program, having trained her assistant

**I see the needs  
and I want to do  
something.**

## Huiling Zhuang

to teach. Huiling teaches Sunday School there and volunteers at her daughter's school. Although she knows that Shuya, now 12, will have a better future here, she hopes she will feel a sense of belonging to both cultures. "Immigration is not an easy process for anyone. The culture is difficult." Huiling misses her brother in China, although last year she sponsored her parents to come here.

She's content now focusing on family and jobs. "I love working here. People respect and celebrate diversity. My manager gives me lots of opportunities and guides me." And she appreciates the beautiful landscapes and the distinctive seasons. "I love the friends my family has made here, as well as the community spirit." She has faith that life will work out. "We believe there is a purpose and we can survive. We'll work hard and be nice to people around us."



Interviewing Brice Guerin at a coffee shop means several interruptions as he greets people he knows. The CEO of THOT Bookkeeping and Tax Services learned quickly that to be successful in business here, you need an effective network. “In

Nova Scotia trust is what it’s all about. It’s about who you know.” Brice left his home in the suburbs of Paris, France, in 1989 to study in Canada. “My intention was to stay here. I needed a change and knew that North America offered opportunities to be what I wanted to be.” He was determined to become his own boss. “I’m too stubborn to work for anyone,” he admits. After only a few years here, he established THOT, a company with a staff of seven that also provides social media and business solutions. “Challenges are challenges only because you think they are. I turned my age and background to an advantage.”

Everything Brice did here was for the first time – shopping, laundry, living alone. “Initially it’s exciting and new. You’re on a high.” He studied English for six months intending to enroll in university but was told his marks from France were too low. Intervention from the French Consul in Moncton, who explained that his French high school grades were equivalent to first-year university here, opened the door. Brice completed the Commerce program at Saint Mary’s University with a major in marketing and human resource management. To make friends he started a karate club and became the instructor. “You have to be extraordinary, better than the rest. I didn’t come here to be average.”

He then worked in finance. At 25 Brice became a financial advisor and within a year was in the top 50 nationally. As THOT CEO, he hosts two monthly networking events for 50 to 100 people to help small businesses connect and grow. Brice has been on the board of Downtown Dartmouth Development Corporation and Main Street Dartmouth Business Improvement District. He has also volunteered with two francophone organizations: Club Richelieu for youth, and Conseil Communautaire du Grand Havre.

## There is beauty in every corner.

“It doesn’t matter where you’re from; stories are similar about what immigrants miss and what they don’t. People sometimes think immigrants are complaining, but they’re comparing things to something they know.” Brice could complain about the price of wine and cheese, and the quality of bread and pastries compared to France, but he prefers to focus on the positive, such as a lower cost of living and less bureaucracy. “I feel more Canadian than French; I’ve spent more than half my life here.” He takes his children – 17 and 14 – to France every year. “The kids are in between, but there’s nothing wrong with that.” Together the family enjoys hiking and the outdoors. “Nothing beats Nova Scotia in the fall, getting lost in your thoughts in the middle of nowhere. There’s beauty in every corner.” Brice enjoys life and continues to work hard, declaring that the day he pays a million dollars in taxes, he will reach his goal.



**Brice Guerin**

One might not expect to find a lawyer from Bulgaria in the Annapolis Valley, but Plamen Petkov is happily settled in the small town of Kentville where he is a partner at Taylor MacLellan Cochrane, an active volunteer, and supporter of immigrants.

Plamen left home in 2002 to study law at the University of New Brunswick. He had already completed the study course for his Master's in Law in Bulgaria – five years' study after high school – but the Bulgarian law system is based on civil law and he wanted to also study common law. “UNB had high rankings. Their admission staff was helpful to me coming from another country.” And once he earned a scholarship, it became an easy decision. His first night was unforgettable arriving after dark to an apartment without electricity. But – thanks to the superintendent's Bulgarian wife – there was at least a bed. Plamen found the campus welcoming and his wife joined him soon after she had completed the study course in English philology at the University of Sofia. Their son was born in Fredericton; later followed by two girls, now eight and five.

Plamen articulated for a year in New Glasgow before moving to Kentville. “I came from a town of 70,000 people in Bulgaria in an agricultural area. It didn't feel that different for me going to these small towns.” Plamen practices litigation and commercial law but has a particular interest in immigration law. “I felt a connection to people going through the process.” He is also on an immigration steering committee helping to integrate and welcome immigrants to the Valley, often working with the King's Volunteer Resource Centre.

Plamen, who speaks Russian, Serbian, and Bulgarian, also volunteers with the Halifax Refugee Clinic. “In Nova Scotia there's no legal aid for refugee matters, so the clinic fits that need. As a lawyer if you want to be in a situation to literally save someone's life, refugee cases offer a good opportunity. Often if a person doesn't get through the refugee process they might be sent back to their country and killed.” His own

**I felt a connection to people going through the process.**

immigration process went well, partly because his English was good. “For us it was smooth sailing, but you read the law and decisions from the court reviews of visa officers' decisions, and you see that the process can be draconian and harsh with no recourse for people.”

Plamen has no plans to move. “I have friends here; the people I work with and meet are friendly and nice. I love the Valley. It is beautiful. We follow the harvest as the u-picks open until late October.” The family also travels around the province and to Ontario. Plamen is a passionate vegetable gardener. “Doing two hours of hard work in the garden is relaxation after a hard day in the office.” The family went to Bulgaria last summer to visit his brother and family. He found many of his friends have moved on, some to England, so life in Bulgaria has changed. Plamen has learned that settling is a gradual process but when they returned to Nova Scotia everything felt “familiar and homey.”



**Plamen Petkov**



If not for a Dutch doctor's desire for a country with open spaces, Halifax would never have been blessed with Studio 21 Fine Art Gallery. The contemporary studio was founded by Ineke Graham who came to Canada as a 17-year-old in 1954 with her parents and all but two of her 11 siblings. "It was a tricky age to make such a big move; you leave all your friends behind. But I was adventurous and curious." The family entered through Pier 21, which later inspired her studio's name. Sponsored by the Dutch Reform Church, they settled in Belmont outside Truro. The beautiful sound of the peepers impressed Ineke. "It gave me such a sense of space, the largeness of the country." Her parents fell in love with the province's beauty, but their primitive living conditions were a contrast from the sophisticated family's large home in the centre of Rotterdam. Her dad interned for a year, making house calls in the middle of the night, and then worked in a medical practice in New Glasgow for many years. Although Ineke had studied English, French, German, and Dutch literature, she attended a country school to become more fluent and worked as a housekeeper to practice speaking English.

Having inherited artistic skills from her mother, Ineke spent two years at the Ontario College of Art and then two years in drawing, painting and printmaking at the Rotterdam Academy of Art. Returning to Nova Scotia, Ineke was her father's temporary receptionist. She married and

raised two boys and two girls in Bedford, but eventually left the marriage. "I thought, now what do I do? The only thing I knew about was art, but had no degree in business." She boldly started the downtown gallery and traveled to build a clientele. When visiting her sons – both geologists – in Calgary, Ineke demonstrated business smarts by selling art at law firms and oil companies there. She operated her highly-regarded gallery for 28 years, hosting shows by notable artists. Despite a staff of three, she worked every day. "It was a wonderful challenge to teach people about how to look at art and appreciate it. Not just understanding the subject matter but how they did it."

**I love the space;  
I love the quiet.  
It was a good move  
in every way.**

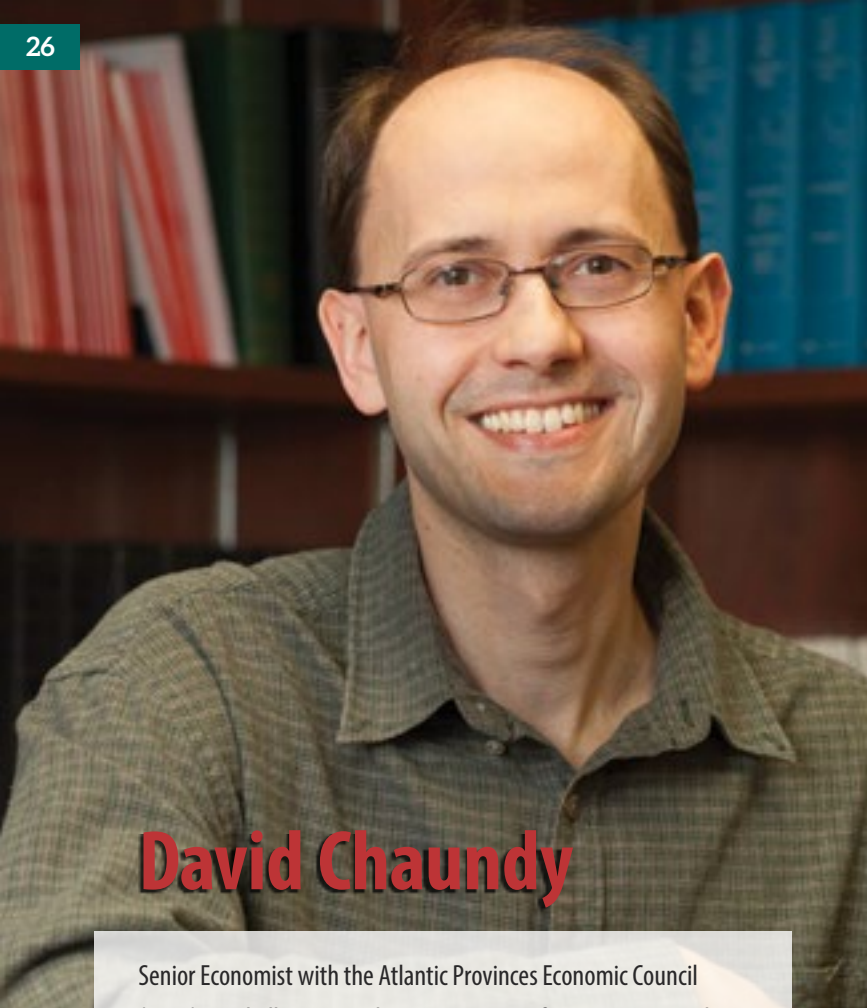
## Ineke Graham

It wasn't easy, but Ineke succeeded. "I loved every bit of it. My clients are my friends. My artists are my friends. I still call them my artists. I have art in my home by all of them." She remarried and is

now retired but daughter Maria works in the gallery. Daughter Laura is a graphic designer. Ineke has eight grandchildren from 12 to 23. Her siblings have settled throughout the world and three practiced medicine in Nova Scotia. Ineke paints portraits and spends time with family. She dreams of taking a cooking course in

Italy, but Canada is home. "Deep down you still feel Dutch; after all, you're a bit of a transplant. But I'd never want to go back to live. In that sense I'm totally Canadian. I love the space; I love the quiet. It was a good move in every way."





## David Chaundy

Senior Economist with the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council (APEC) is a challenging and exciting position for UK native David Chaundy. A six-week contract with APEC turned into a six-month contract which today adds up to over 15 years. "It fits with my values of trying to make a difference on policy topics." David contributes to APEC publications and research reports and presents to business conferences. And he is a past president of the Atlantic Association of Applied Economists where he created a student competition to stimulate an interest in economics.

David earned his undergraduate degree in economics from Cambridge and a Master's of Economics from the University of York.

He also earned a bachelor's degree in biblical and family studies at a Christian-based university in Texas. "I felt called to go there. The

**With kids and roots,  
I don't want to move.**

intent was to become better equipped to serve in a local church." He found people hospitable and kind. "I was on campus and there was a large proportion of international students, so we met people from different cultures. That contributed to the environment."

David used his musical gifts in a chorale and concert band. He had been raised in the Salvation Army and played in brass bands as a youth. Today he plays piano and has written Christian worship songs, some of which have been shared at his local church in Dartmouth. He also started a program to encourage youth to become engaged in church and community. David is reflective about his mix of religion and economics. "My beliefs shape my values and how I work and relate to people. Most days it does not affect the economic analysis I do, but my values sometimes inform my view of economics in certain areas."

David met his New Brunswick-born wife in Texas and they moved to England for three years before coming to Halifax in 1999. "Job prospects for economists in New Brunswick are limited, so Halifax was the best possibility to have a career and be somewhat close to family." David says the discussion about the role of immigration in our economy is more complicated than just wanting more immigrants. We need a higher immigrant retention rate. "We need opportunities and people to match those needs and facilitate economic growth." David has worked with ISANS on immigration issues, and says as an immigrant, it's important to him to feel accepted as part of the community. "This is where I am and this is where I am going to live. I don't keep wishing I was in the UK."

Although British culture and language are similar, he found there was a learning curve. "It's a gradual process but things worked out. We bought a house and started a family." His two children have inherited their dad's musical abilities. "With kids and roots, I don't want to move. It takes a long time to reestablish relationships, change community, church and employer. We'd like to make it work here."

“I think if you come here as an immigrant, you have already proven you are more venturesome and more aggressive than the average person. It takes guts to get up and go where you don’t know anybody.”

***David Grace***

FOUNDER & FORMER PRESIDENT  
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