

THE TCLI MAGAZINE

**SISTERHOOD
TESTIMONIES**

**MENTAL
HEALTH**

**GETTING
A JOB**



WELCOME!!!

Towunmi Coker, Founder, TCLI Foundation

Building healthy communities has been a passion for me since my childhood. In the past 10 years, I've spent my time building healthy and sustainable communities; combining my passion, and education towards closing community gaps to achieve healthy and sustainable communities. This I have done through my non-profit organisation, TCLI Foundation; a non-profit organization that provides educational and social programming with three core foundational pillars - financial stability, quality education and safe health practices, to vulnerable members from low-income and under-resourced communities. I am equally, a Public Health Practitioner and a Community Builder with a MBBS, University of Lagos; MBA South Wales University, and MPH University of Liverpool.

I currently serve as AHS, Greater Edmonton, Health Advisory Council, and served as Working Group lead for the Americas and the Caribbean at Royal Commonwealth Society.

Towunmi Coker is wholly committed to inspiring, motivating and empowering vulnerable youth and women to be the best they can be. I am passionate about improving quality of life by promoting access to inclusive education, financial literacy and socioeconomic empowerment which can equip people with the relevant tools required to live a meaningful life while achieving their set goal. Towunmi has provided over 20 programs in Nigeria and Canada with 30,000 beneficiaries and volunteers.

Through my community projects, I have provided opportunities for low-income students in the TCLI program who have received educational support, school materials, cash prizes for literary and poetry competitions, and mentorship to enhance their classroom experience and present career pathways available through TCLI Foundation.

Under the supervision of Towunmi, the TCLI Foundation Program Outcomes include:

- Increased self-confidence and emotional intelligence; improved literacy, numeracy and financial skills
- 45% increased school attendance and active classroom performance.
- 68% increase in both literacy and numeracy skills among the students especially those in grade 7-12
- Increased communication and interpersonal skills. Shy students now feel more confident to interact with others in school and at home.
- More positive attitudes toward school
- Broader awareness of their geographic or cultural community
- Increased connections in the community.

Take a walk with me as we make use of one of our tools - literature and arts to keep building sustainable communities.

I hope you enjoy this magazine our dedicated team have worked hard to collate and get inspired to join our cause!



BUILDING RESILIENT CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS - DR. SANDRA

Research has shown that immigrants often experience a variety of issues such as language barriers, underemployment and unemployment despite their qualifications and education; the result being several mental health issues including anxiety and depression. They come into Canada healthier than their Canadian counterparts, minding the fact that part of the intake process is a health check so that they don't bother the system. Few years down the line however, their health begins to deteriorate due to lack of support, social dislocation, and other multilayered factors. It is thus important to look at how building resilient cultural and community connections can help these immigrants positively and quickly assimilate into the Canadian society.

Resilient cultural and community connections often revolve around identity reconstruction. A case study of Jamaicans post-migration, revealed that spirituality was one of the major factors that helped them build resilience. These immigrants were able to draw from their church community, and viewed their places of worship as a platform where they could share stories, gain access to resources as well as experience a sense of commonality with other immigrants. The spiritual dimensions of diverse populations are very often ignored even though this is how they most usually make meaning and cope with life to create a sense of normalisation. Spirituality is common with immigrants of African and South American descent.

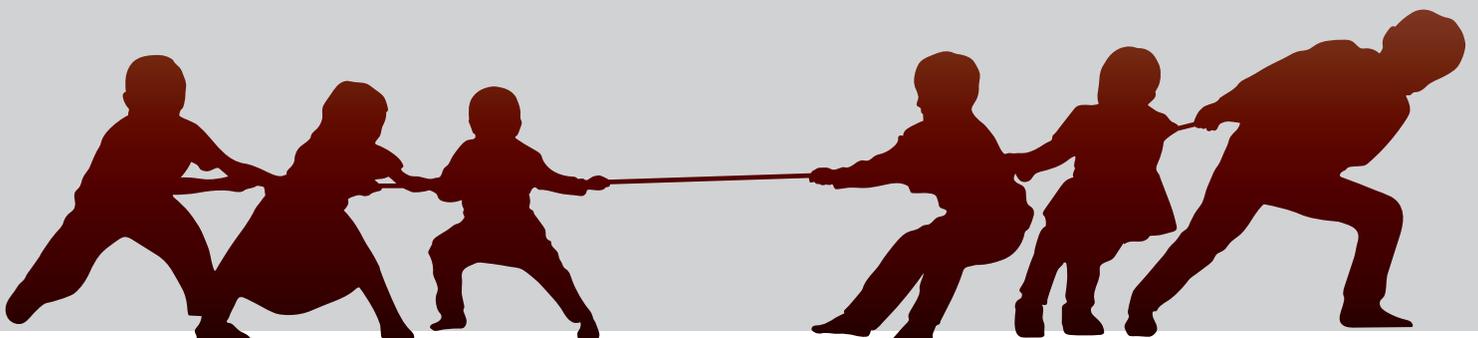
How the pandemic has affected these community connections:

Covid -19 has created lots of dislocation in the faith community. Many immigrants while not being able to build community connections, are also losing jobs in addition to other challenges they face.

At the peak of the pandemic, I checked with about 25 people to get a feel of how they were coping; even though these individuals were medicating more, they also reported praying more and taking the time to check on one another. It was encouraging to see the attempts people made to be connected to others and tapping more into their belief system. There are fundamentalists for sure, but we have to be open-minded and respectful, and realise that faith is the gateway.

Ways to build these connections:

My advice would be to build resilience for yourself first. Be kind to yourself; we sometimes tend to be too hard on ourselves and have high expectations. I would say slow down, re-prioritize; take stock of what's working and what's not. Step away from what's not working for you and build one that works to build a sense of resiliency.



The role of the government:

The government needs to begin to listen to the voices of the groups that are often missing at the table, and foster inclusivity. There has to be a shift from tolerance where we just include people to the acceptance of inclusivity and for the appropriate voices to be heard. It is disturbing for one person to speak on behalf of a community given that a community is not monolithic but diverse; this is oftentimes not a very good representation of that community and can be misleading. The government needs to listen to the voices of the people, and then go beyond listening to hearing and implementing these changes while ensuring equitability and proper representation such as involving insiders in the allocation of resources.

The narrative also needs to shift and whatever research being done should be one that would benefit the community. For instance, it was initially thought that everyone was equally affected by the pandemic, only to later discover that people of colour were disproportionately affected because there was no data or proper representation of people of colour in these research.

We ought to stop using information gleaned from these communities to only highlight the plight of these individuals; we need to begin to ask the right questions such as who are these people doing the research, how do they represent people of colour, where is the funding coming from and where is it going, once the data is collected, who is getting the data, all these questions at the forefront should be used to ensure that the data is beneficial to the community and not just to present their plight negatively. There should be community-based approach in research, policy making and in implementation.

The government also needs to ensure that it is working alongside the people and not just working for the people; it is vital to learn from them and with them and not just learn about them.





PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WHOLENESS

- DR. CHI OTITOJU

Physical wholeness means paying attention to our physical bodies, our health, ensuring that any health issues you might have are properly addressed, engaging in activities that are good for your body physically such as exercising and relaxing.

Mental wholeness involve activities that positively impact your mental health such as taking time to destress, not getting overwhelmed, managing one's time properly, learning how to speak up.

New immigrants can achieve physical and mental wholeness if they take the resources available to them and utilise them properly. It can be challenging when comments about your appearance that seem 'cute' are constantly thrown at you. This is in addition to the stress these immigrants already experience such as the excitement of moving from one continent to the other, navigating the food, language, banking, weather and a lot of other issues. The peculiarity of the situation is such that these immigrants might not know how to talk about these issues, or might not have built enough relationships in order to open up, or they might not even know how to access community resources.

To achieve physical and mental wholeness, it is imperative that we are aware of resources available to us including community resources such as immigrant centres, places of worship, and even taking advantage of the various ethnic stores to build relationships.

My recommendations to anyone coming into Canada or who has been here for only a short time would be to

- Take time to relax amidst all the upheaval of relocating; sit down with your family and relax, walk around.
- Reach out to a leader in your community; if you're a person of faith, reach out to your religious leader. This can make a lot of difference when you're new and still navigating a new territory
- Keep in touch with people from back home
- Find a family doctor
- Look for someone that you can talk to; it gets to a point in the life of every immigrant where they experience a sense of regret relocating to a new country; it is thus important that one tries to speak out and not be alone
- Realise that you have worth no matter how difficult it is getting a job
- Speak up, I can never emphasise this enough. We need to empower ourselves with information and speak up when we experience difficult situations

Part of physical and mental wholeness is remembering who you are and where you are coming from. This is important for your self-esteem as you encounter several situations that tend to stress you out physically and mentally. We also embrace the community we find ourselves in, open our minds to find the good in it, take the things that work for you and build on them, and know that you do not need to suffer in silence.



MEETING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY DURING COVID-19

- JOY ODEROHWO (MScPH, RN)

Our older adult communities continue to be disproportionately impacted by the unparalleled situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. The medical emergencies and complications associated with COVID-19 do not only pose a greater risk for this unique population, the crisis adds another layer of psychological and behavioral changes.

Seniors in Canada are a rapidly growing segment of the population and are living longer and healthier lives than previous generations. In 2014, over 6 million Canadians were aged 65 or older, representing 15.6 percent of Canada's population. By 2030, seniors are expected to reach over 9.5 million and make up 23 percent of Canadians. The most recent statistics on seniors in Canada indicate that older adults account for 6,835,866 of Canadian population. Out of this number, over 43.5% live in collectives such as nursing homes or residences for senior citizens.

In my experience working with the elderly, I have observed that, even in pre-pandemic times, older adults experience higher risks of illness, grief, loss and social isolation. These are associated with higher rates of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, leading to poorer health outcomes and increased mortality rates from exacerbation of underlying medical conditions. For some older adults with pre-existing psychiatric illnesses, social distancing requirements increase their anxiety, depression, fear and, especially, social isolation and loneliness. Others, with and without known behavioral or mental health concerns, demonstrate extraordinary resilience because of the wisdom and perspective of years of life experiences.

Of immense concern in this pandemic is the social disconnection between older adults and their families, friends and social circle. Guided by the principle behind the social determinants of health, social support networks play a valuable role in the coping skills of the older adults for successful transition and aging. In various long term home communities, older adults are unable to receive visitors who may

provide relief, comfort and support especially during time of complications from poor health and disability and those at home face serious isolation from family and friends.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, older adults need to be encouraged to seek help to constantly engage with family and friends through various technologies such as video conferencing, face time and so on. Older adults are constantly encouraged to utilize the green spaces around them. Taking short, frequent walks around the home or community with the assistance of caregivers can clear the head from the worries of the moment. We also continue to provide health teaching to the older adults and their families on cues on how to recognize psychological changes such as changes in appetite (anorexia and bulimia), changes in sleep patterns (sleep-wake cycles), polyuria, nocturia, increased fatigue, worry, apathy and anhedonia and if concerns arise, to ask for support from the wellness team members, director of care or call any of the support lines readily made available to all older adults both at home and in the nursing home communities.





COMMUNICATION AS A HEALTHY COPING STRATEGY

- REBECCA EDIALE, (MScPh)

As we ushered in the new year of 2021, many people wished each other a 'Happy Zoom Year' rather than the usual New Year greetings. Communication is a subject that has been mostly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, the lack of it causing individuals the world over, to be plagued with feelings of depression, anxiety, uncertainty, and several other stress-linked emotions either directly or indirectly.

It is now a norm to hear the phrases, 'social distancing', '6 feet apart', 'mask up', and so many other rules and guidelines that are fast defining the way we communicate. How do we communicate in the current climate, when the very word itself has been re-defined? What ways can we use the very tools of communication to our advantage?

Isolation is a serious consideration for depression; as such, this article suggests several ways that we can adapt innovative and resourceful communication tools to cope with stress.

I will divide the communication strategies into several arms:

Communicate by doing:

This involves actively engaging in activities that communicate how you feel with the goal of relieving stressful emotions.

Some ways to achieve this:

Do something thoughtful for someone else to show them you are thinking about them; apart from making the other person's world a little better, you also make yourself feel good and thus releasing some stressed-up feelings.

Communicate stressful feelings by loudly expressing yourself. Locate an environment like a park, or your basement, or maybe even putting your face into a pillow and express how you feel. Working with sexually abused girls, we often had to encourage them to take a shouting time, where they just scream out loudly without care. Sometimes, it just helps to let things out. Cry loudly, scream, stomp, shake your fists, whatever will help to relieve pent up feelings of stress.

Pick up a sport or engage in active exercise. Punch those exercise bags with more vigor than you normally would. Convert something you like into an exercise activity. For example, I like to dance, often, I'll play a song I enjoy and dance so hard until I am exhausted.

Communicate by being:

This looks at how a 'state of being' rather than 'action' can work positively to ease stressful emotions. One must note that this means of communication should not be used as an excuse to avoid responsibility, thus, communication by being should not be engaged in for

extended periods.

Create a space where you are just you; where you can just meditate or engage in a spiritual activity, or where you can just take a time out, tune out the everyday hassles of life and just be you; listen to a calming song on YouTube, relax, put your feet up, watch a movie, look up funny videos, have a good laugh, just press pause on everyday normal life and just be you.

The goal is to release stressful emotions, to just step back and take things easy for a little bit, clear your head, give yourself an opportunity to be you.

Communicate by speaking:

This is by far one of the most common means of communication, which if not properly controlled, can cause even more stress. Everywhere you look someone is speaking, and what we listen to and absorb has a direct impact on our mental wellness. Consequently, it is important that you identify the people that you believe can positively contribute the most to your mental well-being and speak up; talk to a trusted friend, a Psychologist, a spiritual leader, chat with someone you trust, join a focus group, join a WhatsApp or Telegram group, have healthy arguments, chat up a friend. Isolation is a recipe for depression and other mental health issues. Get connected!

The common factor for all three methods is intentionality. Be decisive in tackling the stressors in your life once you identify them. Using communication as a coping strategy can prove to be a cost-effective means



JUST ARRIVED IN CANADA?

Here are 10 things you need to do:

Get a social insurance number

Rent a house

Open a bank account

Get a health card (and a family doctor)

Put your kids in school (if applicable)

Identify and make use of community resources such as immigrant centres

Apply for a job (or start a business)

Join a support group

Get bus passes

Buy a car

Quick tip:

Remember to check the weather every morning (both actual temperature and real feel) before you leave the house

Ways to connect:

Living in a land that is far away from almost everything and everyone you know can be challenging. It is important to know the resources that are available to you in your community.

Some of these resources include:

Immigrant support centres: In almost every city, these centres are available to support newcomers to Canada. They usually offer several services providing clothing, low cost housing, food, resume writing, short courses, internship opportunities and lots more. With an internet search, you can locate one close to you.

Places of worship: If you're religious, you'll find great support. Most places of worship are welcoming and offer lots of support services too.

The library: Here, you can find interesting activities for your kids, access print and digital materials, some libraries even offer free copying and printing services

Online shopping: Don't fret at prices you see in stores, you can get great deals from platforms such as Facebook marketplace, Kijiji, Shopify, and other local online platforms in your area. Don't forget to shop clearance too!

WhatsApp Support Groups: There are many whatsapp groups that you can plug into. Ask a friend or family how you can gain access one relevant to your environment and profession.

THE BIG QUESTION: GETTING A JOB

Getting a job is one major source of concern for newly landed immigrants. Here are some tips from people who were able to quickly land jobs:

- Have a great resume: Some immigrant organization offer resume review services
- Tailor your resume to each job role
- Use a job agency
- Regularly review job boards such as Indeed, ReachHire, Canada.ca, etc
- Connect with recruiters on LinkedIn
- Use a resume scanner such as job scan
- Practice interview questions
- Read about the company before the interview
- Be honest
- Don't forget to send them an email after a job interview
- Take a short course relevant to the job you want
- Use your connections
- Be friendly and easy going...talk about the weather!
- When pressured to state a salary, state an amount and mention that it is negotiable
- Show up on time!!

Quick tip: While you work towards your career of choice, there are alternative roles you can fit into such as teaching assistant, dental assistant, legal assistant or para-legal, health assistant, administrative assistant, and lots more!



TESTIMONIALS FROM SISTERHOOD PROJECT

First Participant:

I have been in Canada for two years now and have faced a number of challenges. The first being, transitioning to the new culture. It took me some time to adapt to the way of life. Second was integrating the professional domain. Almost every job I applied for required the Canadian experience which I did not have at the time. It took me about six months, to find a job after I relocated from Winnipeg to Edmonton. This was after several job applications and interviews where my lack of Canadian experience was a disadvantage.

Joining the sisterhood platform has impacted me positively. The activities and programs designed are purpose driven to provide support to immigrants of which I am one. They also make necessary resources available which helps in building us. I learnt about vision boards from this platform which is a great tool in setting and accomplishing goals. The most recent program I benefited from is the conversation session that held in celebration of the Black History month in Canada. These sessions focused on Bridging Racial gaps and Bridging Gender gaps and what Men have to say. This particularly widened my knowledge because I am not only a black Immigrant but a black female immigrant who faces a number of discrimination. Thus need to know how to react to such and in the right way.

My message to those looking for support system will be to look for a platform or environment that seek to promote and encourage positivity and growth mindset like the sisterhood so as to overcome whatever challenge that arises.

-Nadege

Second participant:

- Some challenges I faced in Canada included difficulty getting a job, childcare. I landed in Aug 2019, and didn't get a job until mid-October. My kids were 4 and 2 at the time so I had no help. At the time, I had applied for a visit visa for my mum, and I could not start working until she arrived and could stay home with the kids for one year.

- The Sisterhood platform has been of immense help - I got a laptop when I needed one, a network of sisters where you share ideas, rub minds and grow together. Sisterhood also has many more benefits that I am yet to tap into. I have invited my friends to join and they have also invited theirs. I have also benefited from the various sessions we have had on mental health, career, tax information, vision board etc.

- If you need a support system - Sisterhood is the place to be!

-Omo



Third Participant:

When I arrived Canada, I didn't really have challenges. I used all resources available - settlement organisations, I reached out to people within my profession on LinkedIn, I attended programs and I spent a great deal of time networking so most of the time I had someone within my network who could point me in the right direction. People were really kind and eager to help. I attended the program to meet and integrate with other blacks within my city and I found the programme insightful.

The TCLI platform enables me to connect with Alicia Fowler (a speaker on one of the TCLI event), who spoke about making tough choices between family and career. I reached out to her and we have been friends since then. She is always willing to share her opinion, render assistance and generally giving moral and emotional support.

I want to encourage others to reach out to anyone you think might be of help to you. You might not get a positive response all the time but keep at it. Be open minded, be positive. There are people who have passed through whatever you might be going through. Run your thoughts by them, reach out for support, maintain a work life balance, drink lots of water and just have fun.

-Kemi

Fourth Participant: As a new immigrant, it was quite difficult getting my first job in Canada and finding like-minded people to network and interact with, and to learn more about my field, which made settling down in Canada challenging.

Thanks to sisterhood accountability partner initiative, I was paired with a partner who encouraged me and helped me take good career decisions. As a result, I was able to transition a certification I previously had in Nigeria to a Canada equivalent to increase my employability. Also through sisterhood, I have been able to benefit from different sessions, such as learning how the Canada tax system works and other topics like managing stress and work life balance .

To other sisters out there, information is king in Canada. Leverage on platforms like sisterhood for networking and to also meet strong, like minded women who are always willing to share and help out.

-Ijeoma



ALL ABOUT MY TAXES

Do I have to file a tax return?

When many people think of their taxes, it can seem frightening to those who aren't used to the system. However, if you have been filing your returns, you understand that there are many benefits.

According to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), you have to file a return if:

1. You were a resident of Canada during the year
2. You expect to receive some benefits like child benefit and GST, as well as other provincial benefits
3. If you want to claim a refund
4. If you have to pay taxes

There are many other reasons and you can find them here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/about-your-tax-return/you-have-file-a-return.html>

How can I file a return?

- You can use free or paid for softwares available online. For a list of these software, go to
- Using an efiler: some accountants like me are registered with the CRA and can help you do your returns.
- Take advantage of the community volunteer tax clinics available in every region. There are free tax clinics and some are even virtual right now. Most are available by appointment and have their contact info online as well.
- You can also paper file your returns by printing and filling out forms from the internet or call the CRA to have these forms sent by mail.

For more information on your options for filing visit the CRA website at <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/taxes/income-tax/personal-income-tax/get-ready-taxes/ways.html>

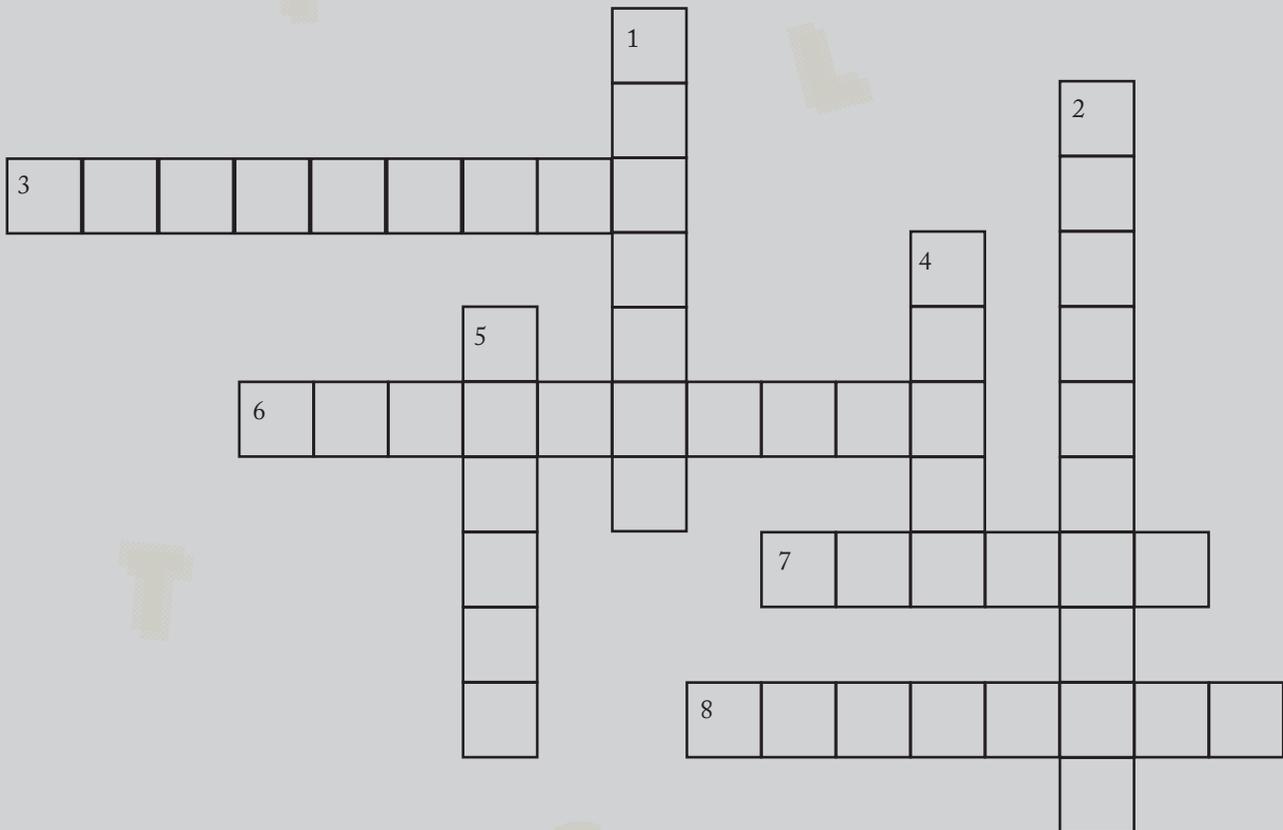
After I file what next?

You have to wait for the CRA to assess your returns and issue you what is called a notice of assessment. Generally, it takes about 2 weeks (8 -12weeks for paper filed returns), to be assessed after you file. Note that some returns may take longer as it is assessed on a case by case basis.

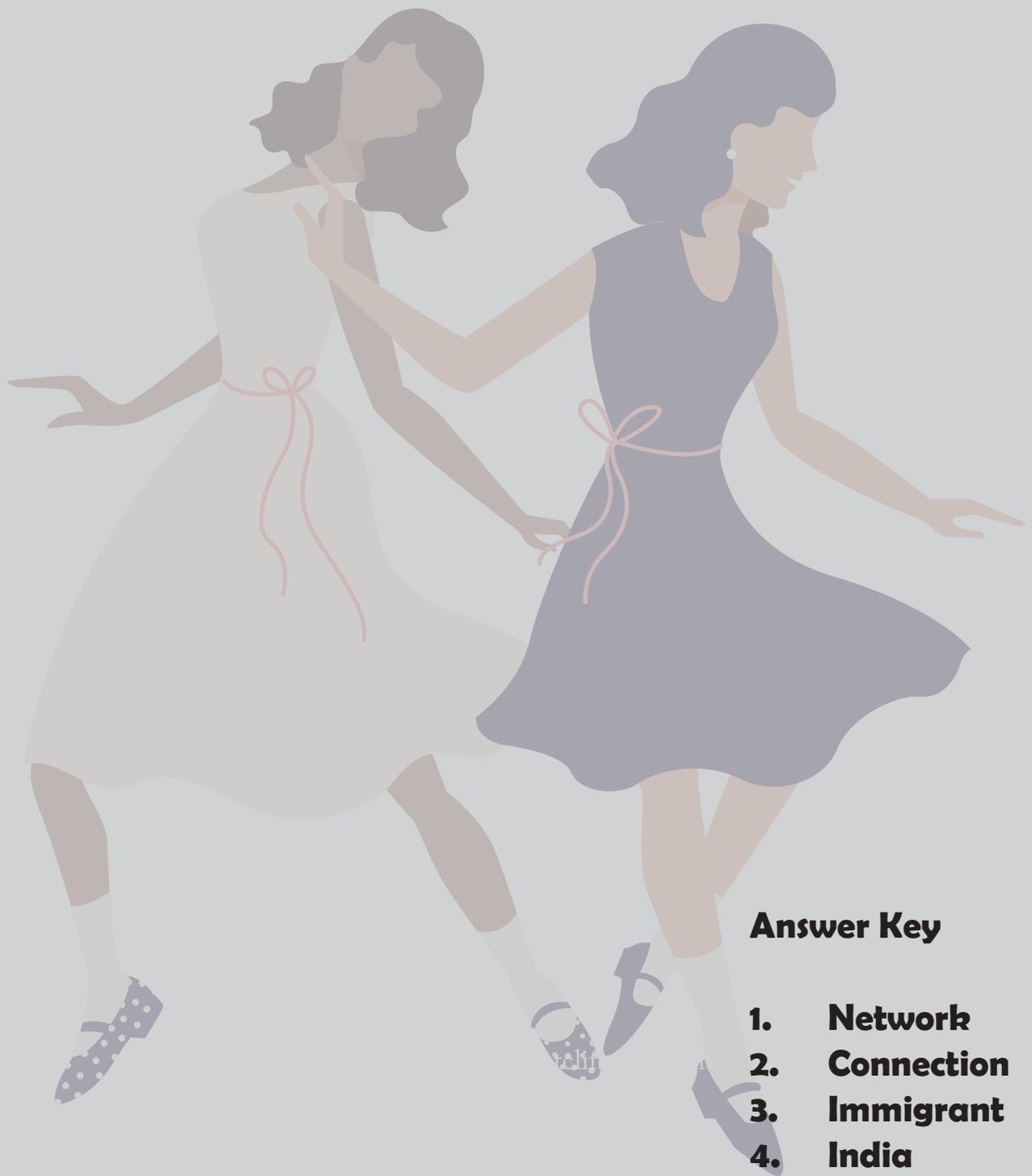
It is important to read up tax information from the government website; there is so much you can learn about your returns and how they work in Canada. You can also reach out to tax preparers and companies to get more info.

Article by Yinka Adedeji, CPA

CROSSWORD



1. Meeting with people of same profession to share ideas and information
2. Forming relationships with an individual or a group
3. Living in another country as a permanent resident
4. An Asian country
5. Able to carry heavy things
6. A project by the TCLI Foundation
7. You go to professional to check it
8. A flat surface you can stand on



Answer Key

- 1. Network**
- 2. Connection**
- 3. Immigrant**
- 4. India**
- 5. Strong**
- 6. Sisterhood**
- 7. Health**
- 8. Platform**