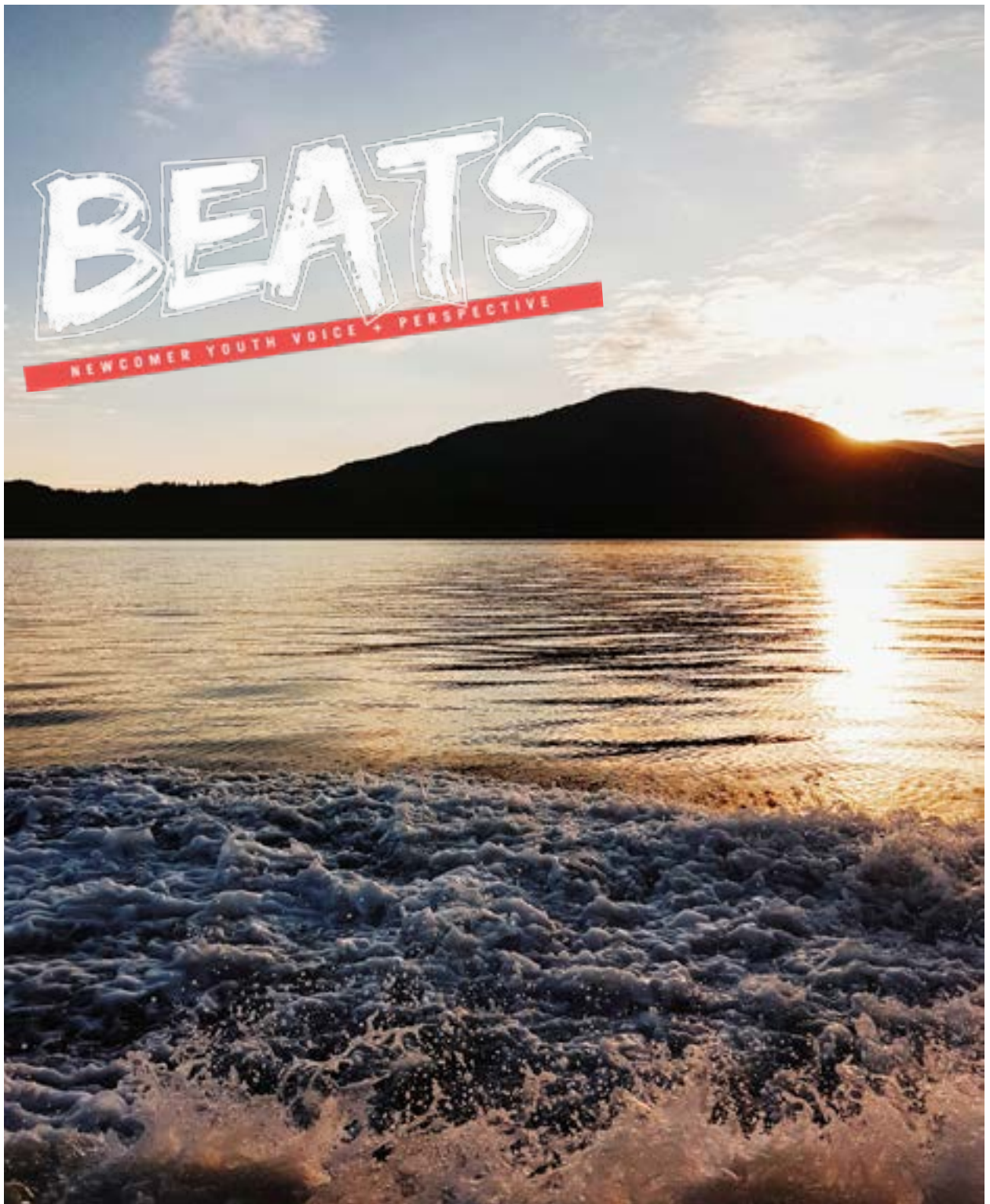


BEATS

NEWCOMER YOUTH VOICE + PERSPECTIVE



ISSUE 16
FALL 2019



BEATS RECOGNIZES THE UNCEDED COAST SALISH TERRITORIES OF
Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations

Editor's Note

Golsa Golestaneh

Hello and welcome to Issue 16! This issue has had the smallest editorial team ever in the history of BEATS! Yet, our editors have come up with heartfelt stories of migration, belonging, and everything in between. This issue is special in many ways, one of which is the fact that #16 is the last issue we launch in partnership with LOVE BC! That's right, BEATS is going to be an independent initiative and in order to do that we will be going on a break for an unknown period of time. Thank you all for supporting us in this journey!

We would like to extend our gratitude to appreciate LOVE BC's support in the past three years. We also acknowledge that this issue has been made possible by the generous fundings received from Telus Friendly Future Foundation.

LOVE BC

LOVE is a youth-driven media arts-based non-profit organization that facilitates violence prevention and intervention programming to youth who face multiple barriers. LOVE youth use media arts to document their experiences, share their views of the world, and build leadership skills to break the cycle of violence in their lives and communities.

To learn more about LOVE BC's work please go to: loveorganization.ca/bc
or Email us at: info@loveorganization.ca



TELUS Friendly
Future Foundation

Greater
than
anything

LOVE

Editorial Team



Fatima Haidari

Fatima has been living in Canada since 2015. She is currently studying criminology at Langara College and plans on transferring to SFU. Hiking, reading, and biking are her hobbies. She likes trying different foods and spicy food is her favourite.



Eris Xanthakos

Eris is a mixed Guatemalan and Greek human who loves all forms of creativity, from poetry to digital paintings, to sidewalk chalk drawings. They feel at home when they are in nature and surrounded by trees, loving people, and animals. They appreciate being in this world and learning more about others' cultures and their own ancestry every day. They are also a big fan of cooking, with a preference for spicy food.

External Contributor



Ayan Ismail

Ayan is a Black, African, Muslim woman who is grateful to live on the Unceded territories of the Coast Salish Peoples. She is an SFU student pursuing International Studies and Sociology. She is invested in facilitation and programs that support meaningful youth engagement, specifically racialized migrant, refugee youth. When not deeply intrigued in decolonial poetry and African literature books, you can find Ayan gushing about basketball, acting + filmmaking, and organizing the Afrocentrism Conference 2019!

Table of Contents

6.
What does
Migration
Mean
to You?

8.
The Hardships
and Resilience of
First-Generation
Canadians

10.
My
Journey
to
Canada

12.
What does It
Mean to be a
Refugee on
Stolen Lands?

14.
On
Social
Media

17.
Anti-Blackness in
Refugee and
Immigrant
Community-Organizing
Spaces

18.
Neurodiversity

20.
Dear
Humanity

22.
On
Healing
from
Trauma

What does Migration Mean to You?

-A Collaboration

“ Once one’s foot is stuck in the mud, on an unknown land, it is stuck. Tell him you may see your home in your dreams from now on. -Saadi Shirazi ”

“ Migration means one of the most difficult and bravest journeys a person can go through. ”

“ Migration to me means resiliency, perseverance and persistence. It carries with it reminders of colonization and imperialism, of displacement and disconnection. It holds memories of feeling not being enough, not fitting enough, in societies that will always see Immigrants and Refugees as the other. It brings me hope that one day one’s immigration background will not be a thing, especially since we all are immigrants to these stolen lands in one way or another. Except Indigenous Peoples who have always been the custodians of these lands. ”

“ I feel lonely almost all the time since I moved to Canada. I left behind my caring family and friends, and I do not even know when I will be visiting them. I am dreaming each and every single night about my family, but it is just a dream. I recall the moments when I was surrounded with my beloved siblings and parents. However, I did not totally grasp it before. I used to live far away from my parents and my sisters, but my two brothers and my two sisters were living with me under the same roof. I even shared the room with them which is very normal in Afghanistan. In Canada, I know way more people now than when I had just arrived here. Still I do not really feel so close with them since they have their own friend circles plus it is extremely hard to break the circle and join in. They have known each other for several years and are on the same page. When I get the chance to talk with my family, I always tell them that I got used to Canada, but it is not what I precisely feel in my heart. To be honest, I only say that because I do not want them to be worried about me. They have many more concerns, so I evade it by purpose. I can feel how much they have missed me, especially my mom and my younger sisters. ”



The Hardships and Resilience of First-Generation Canadians

Writing and Illustration by Eris Xanthakos

I want you to imagine being separated from every person who you are close to. The only likelihood of seeing your friends being through sporadic telephone calls. To find yourself in another area, with different culture and climate and customs and language that you must adapt to or risk alienation and unemployment, with your past education meaning very little. You may have family to help you in your new destination, but the journey remains harsh and unforgiving. You move forward because you truly believe a better life lies beyond. This is a common experience for many first-generation Canadians: Canadians who were born in a different country and immigrated to Canada or took refuge in Canada.

The difficulties that come with immigrating to Canada cannot be understated. To try to escape poverty, war, or horrible conditions in your home country, only to be met with compounding challenges, such as risking homelessness, trouble finding employment, practicing a difficult new language, and being separated from loved ones. Some of those who immigrate can find it hard to express disappointment, feeling that they should be grateful they were able to come here at all, and those who do make complaints about life in their new country might be met with questions, such as: “Why don’t you just go back to your home country?” or “If life is so bad here, why don’t you move elsewhere?” For those whose families aren’t first-generation Canadians, it can be hard to imagine how difficult it is, and some don’t empathize with their situation. I know that, as a teenager, I didn’t completely comprehend just how difficult it was for my family, as I was being raised in

a way where my family tried to keep any difficulties hidden, wanting as normal a life for me as possible. Now, I recognize just how many struggles there were for them.

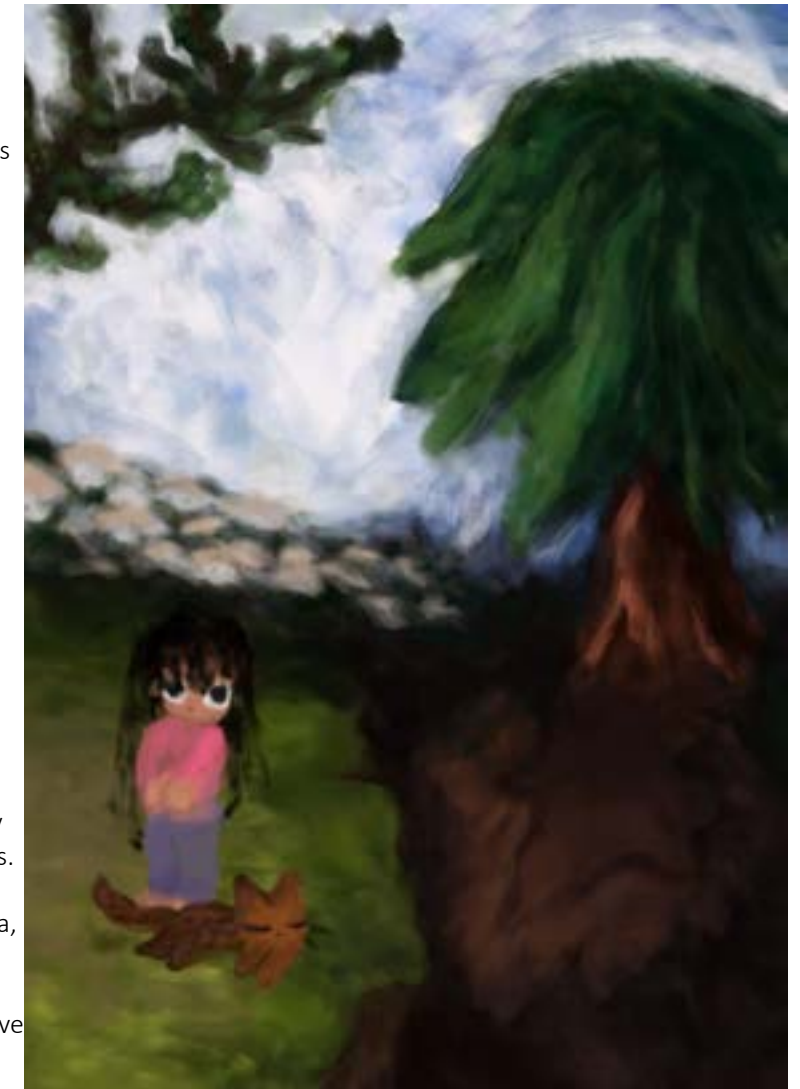
Canada is often seen as the ‘land of opportunity’ for those who come here for the first time. Indeed, there are often work and education opportunities here that are easier to access for the children of first-generation Canadians, in comparison to their home country; the main reason my mother took refuge here was because the average wages in Guatemala are much lower than either the United States or Canada, and she wanted her children to have a comfortable life. In Canada, she found some success; she was able to make enough money to survive and support her children. Finding “success” in Canada involved compromising; she prioritized the lives of her children over her own. She couldn’t spend time socializing with others or furthering her own education, as she was fully concentrated on work and her children’s education. I think that many first-generation Canadians end up making these kinds of compromises; I have known of many situations where someone was a teacher in their home country, but couldn’t find teaching employment in Canada, and had to compromise by taking a manual labour job to provide for their family.

While immigration services have improved since the era when my parents came to Canada, one of the hardest problems that remains is loneliness among first-generation Canadians. Loneliness is one of the most dominant stressors for immigrants.

While Canada offers opportunities to those who immigrate here, being away from friends and family

is difficult to cope with. It is much easier to handle tough situations when you have friends by your side to support you, or a trusted elder to confide in. First-generation Canadians often lack the number of friends they had back home, especially if they start a family; the combination of household work and holding a job often takes up too much time. Co-workers can become a source of companionship, or a source of discrimination, depending on their work environment. Of course, life in Canada varies, and some have an easier time than others. But even if someone finds a well-paying job and can further their education, they can still struggle with the loss of friends, and the struggle of living with barely any social support should not be understated. Through all the hardships they face, first-generation Canadians have an immense amount of resilience. I am proud of my family for surviving hardships and loneliness. There are many first-generation Canadians who are thriving in Canada, but I believe it’s important to not forget the struggle that many faced and are still facing. For those who have grown up in the comfort of always having friends and family

close-by, please take a moment to be thankful for that, and be compassionate and welcoming to newcomers. Your friendship could mean a world of difference.



My Journey to Canada

Writing by Fatima Haidari

I had never thought I would move to Canada without my... I was born and raised in Ghazni, Afghanistan. I grew up in a big family, and I could not imagine my life without them. When things got worse back in my country, I had no option but to flee Afghanistan. My journey includes leaving Afghanistan, getting to Canada, and starting my new life here. Leaving Afghanistan was the toughest thing to do for different reasons. First, I was only seventeen when I left Afghanistan without my family on August 13, 2015. I was not certain if I could make it all by myself, but I did it. Also, I left my family, friends, and relatives behind. I was not able to say a proper goodbye to them. It took me seven hours to get to Dubai from Kabul, and I waited for twelve hours in Dubai Airport. There were tons of people in the airport, yet I felt like the loneliest creature at that time. I clearly remember the moment when my mom was crying. I hated to see her in tears, and I could not fully understand how she felt inside. It was a valuable experience despite its challenges. I got to Canada on August 17, 2015 after a long and tiring trip. I went to the immigration office in Downtown to start my asylum seeking process. When I entered the office, I saw a kind-looking officer. After we greeted each other, he asked me if I needed help. I explained why I was there and what I needed support with. He gave me a brochure and a map, then, he directed me to go to Settlement Orientation Service (SOS) in order to fill out some forms for my immigration process. He told me that

it takes fifteen minutes to get there. However, it took me more than nine hours to find SOS since I did not know how to get there. I ended up going to Downtown Eastside. I was literally shocked to see countless people on the street. By the time I found SOS, it was closed because it was 5pm already. I was exhausted and had no energy to walk, so I waited by a restaurant until 9pm. I was looking for a hotel to stay in, but I had no idea how to find one. Then, an elderly man walked by me and said that it is not safe to be there alone. He said he can show me where the hotel is if I pay him \$10. I agreed to pay him as long as I could find a hotel to stay. It took me a long time to find SOS and hotel, but it happened. A small help can make a big difference.

I am still adjusting my new life in Canada which is very different than my home country. I used to live with my family which consists of thirteen members, I could easily ask them for help if I needed. They always supported me through thin and thick moments of my life. I have been in Canada for four years and a half, yet I did not get used to it completely. In fact, I will never get used to family separation no matter what. I have lots of responsibility here, like paying my bills, going to school, and working at the same time which I had never done before. Living far away from my family is the most challenging part of it. I dream about them every single night. The security is getting worse and worse back there; when I see horrible news on the media, it breaks my heart into pieces. I contact them

Photography by Ayan Ismail



to find out if they are okay. Due to time difference, sometimes it takes a while to hear back from them. I try to make myself busy, so that I can minimize my concerns about them. I am still hopeful to reunite with my family and live with them like before. Overall, my journey to Canada involved countless challenges, but all of them taught me different lessons. I would not be able to realize the significant role of my family in my life if I did not have this experience. Also, it taught me to be independent

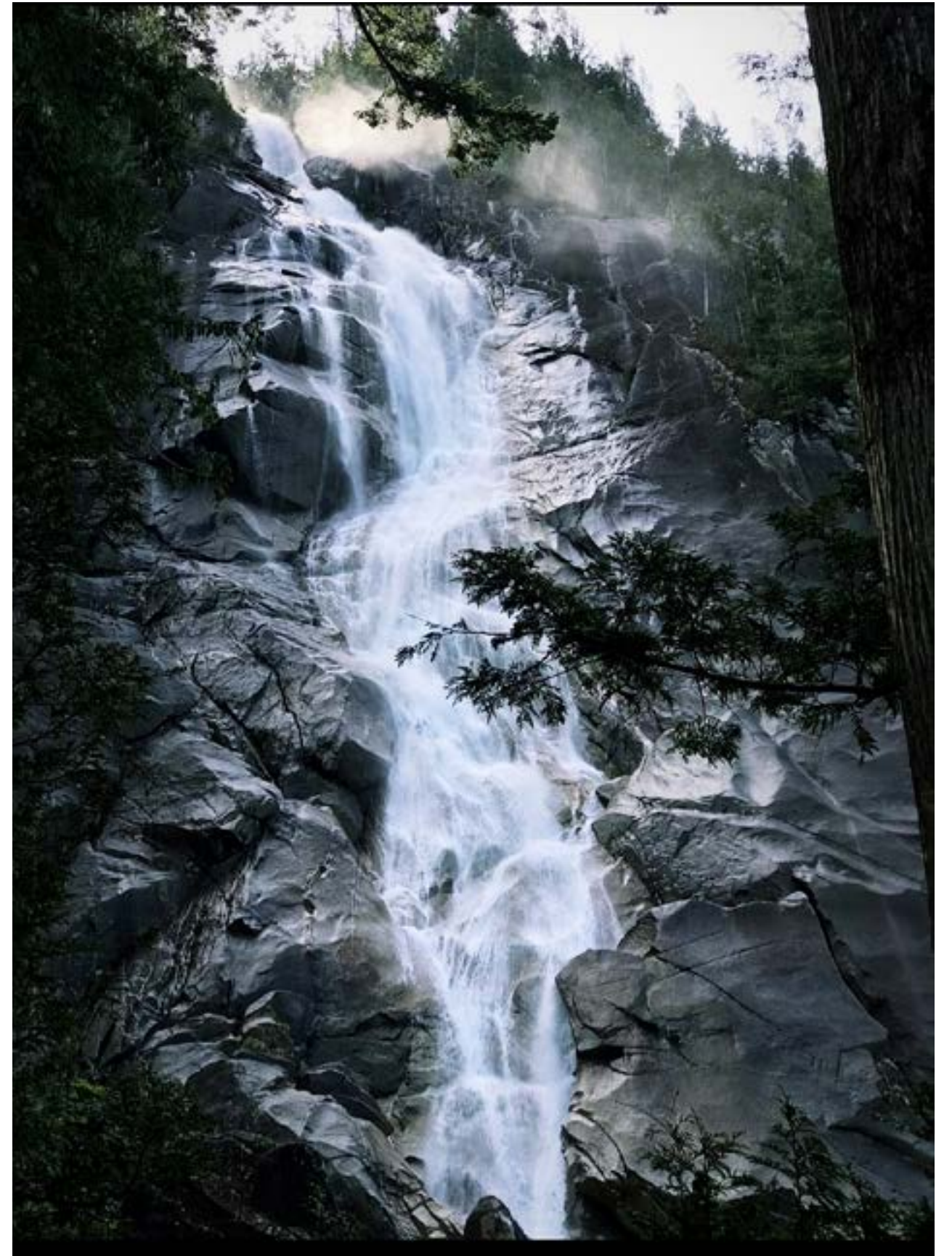
and tackle problems because those skills are vital to survive. All of the mentioned challenges have shaped my life, and I am grateful for experiencing them in my life. They were tough to overcome, but very rewarding. Lastly, I wish no one to be forced to leave their loved ones behind and separate from their families at a very young age.

What does It Mean to be a Refugee on Stolen Lands?

Writing and Photography by Ayan Ismail

As a newcomer to Canada, I was not aware of the realities of Indigenous folks. This is something that came as a shock to me because it was not what I knew of or what I expected given what I grew up seeing about Canada in the media. The Canada I saw in media while I grew up in the refugee camp was totally different from the Canada I saw with my eyes once I moved here. The level of inequality, discrimination, and racism that I saw and faced was very alarming for me as a newcomer. After getting involved in the community, I got to learn more about Indigenous peoples, the history of colonization that they faced under European colonizers, and the genocide from which they survived. This was heartbreaking to learn because I come from a place and country that has been through similar experiences the consequences of which included my seeking of refuge here. I took it upon myself to learn more about Indigenous communities and find ways to ensure that I stood in solidarity with them. The

reality is that, Indigenous communities in Canada are very strong and resilient. Working alongside Indigenous youth has been the most eye-opening experience since I moved here. Therefore, it is important that refugee and immigrant communities make it a priority to familiarize themselves with the realities of Indigenous peoples of these lands. Ignorance should not be an excuse anymore given the access to internet that many enjoy. Make it your responsibility to learn more about the people whose lands you exist on, because although under a different circumstance, we are settlers on these unceded and stolen lands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples. We should put in the effort and make it our duty to stand in solidarity with Indigenous folks in the fight for their sovereignty.



On Social Media

Writing by Fatima Haidari

Illustration by Eris Xanthakos

Social media has negative consequences along the positive impacts on our lives. Some people try to live up to societal expectations. This trend is more common with young girls and will have severe negative impacts if they cannot achieve those desirable goals. However, social media shows that reaching those goals are very easy if you are serious and dedicated. Let me demonstrate this problem with examples. Instagram is one of the most influential media platforms when it comes to modeling, desired weight, and followers. Models on Instagram invariably have suggestions on how to look like them even if they do not express it in the most blatant ways. They often start with sharing their own modeling journeys. They usually associate modeling to diet change, gym membership and sometimes weight loss medications; they are equipped with how and who to target. It is obvious that there are countless hidden business goals behind those advertisements via social media. Sometimes, they even share before and after images to highlight the impact of gym membership, diet, and weight loss medications. Therefore, many young girls start hating the way they look, and take on those suggestions. Young girls start adopting new diets, cutting fat from their diet, avoid consuming sweets. It is important to acknowledge that all these decisions are personal choices, but I personally think that they are heavily influenced by unprofessionals. These types of advertisements about ideal body, physical appearance, and how both are related to bringing happiness are unrealistic and damaging to individual's health and wellbeing. Moreover, girls start losing their self-esteem. As a result, they minimize their engagement in activities because they think other people will judge them. In some cases, they withdraw from social activities entirely which can disrupt their mental health. Besides, they become very paranoid of being fat, and

spend a lot of time to buy food because they try to buy and consume the less fatty food. That constant concern about being fat or gaining weight creates anxiety. Anxiety can diminish social and academic performance. All these problems are interconnected and have cyclic patterns. We all know that these kinds of problems exist in our society, but still people are not encouraged to talk about them. Instead, people are prone to relating them to personal problems while they are clearly social issues and require collective solutions. Instead of body shaming, diet change, and gym membership we should talk about underlying problems and should not blame anyone for talking about it. Unfortunately, the social media problems do not end here. Furthermore, the average time we spend on social media is eight hours and most of those hours are spent to fight off boredom which entails a lot about today's lifestyle. We think that social media keeps us connected to other people which is true to some extent. However, it takes away the potential opportunities of interacting with people who are around us. In other words, everyone is glued to their phones so much that it seems very weird when you start to interact with strangers while commuting. It even happens within our own friend circles when we plan to hangout, but unavoidably everyone is attached to their phones. On the other hand, online interaction replaced face to face interaction and communication. It is worthwhile to mention that meeting face to face is not feasible when people are living far away from each other, but we see it among people who are living geographically close to each other as well.





Anti-Blackness in Refugee and Immigrant Community-Organizing Spaces

Writing and Photography by Ayan Ismail

Being in refugee and immigrant justice communities as a Black person can be very exhausting. It needs a lot of energy to survive in these organizing spaces. One's Blackness is completely erased as folks try to hide their anti-Blackness under the "we're all migrants and fighting for the same cause" rhetoric. No, trying to strip off people's blackness *is* ANTI-BLACKNESS. Excluding Black folks' voices from conversations that affect refugee and migrants *is* ANTI-BLACKNESS. We need to ask ourselves why migrant justice organizing spaces, especially in Vancouver, don't always include Black folks. I am a person who is often in these spaces and continually face anti-Blackness. We need to critically think why the erasure of my Blackness is needed for me to be accepted in these spaces. Why the acceptance of my other identities such as being a woman or being Muslim is more important than my Blackness. When events around refugee and immigrant justice are organized and fail to include Black voices, that

organizing is showcasing ANTI-BLACK RACISM. Some of us keep showing up to these spaces that continue to exclude us and pick and choose our identities because we deeply care about this work. It is very exhausting to exist and fully show up in spaces where your Blackness is downplayed, sometimes ignored and pushed away until non-Black folks think it matters. I carry with me various identities but my Blackness in these spaces should be acknowledged despite how uncomfortable it may make folks feel. Trying to find ways to relate to me based on my other identities and ignoring my Blackness for the sake of your comfort is not okay and it should stop because that is ANTI-BLACKNESS. It is important that anti-Blackness in refugee and immigrant organizing spaces is named, called out, and addressed as failure to do so hinders progress.

Neurodiversity

Writing and Illustration by Eris Xanthakos

I am who I am
Being born,
A celebration in itself

We all are who we are
With regrets
With pain
With love
Holding the spectrum of emotions
No matter how we look from the outside

In this world
Infinite modes of expression;
Hands flapping, feet swaying, rousing speech
Gaze averted, a quiet voice, brief whispers
The differences between our bodies
The differences between our minds
All have the right to exist in this world.
Though in the past
We may have been suppressed,
And rejected
By those who shamed our differences,
We still are who we are
Our hearts strong
Our minds unique

Like every star in the sky, we are different
And we shine.



Dear Humanity,

I hope you are doing well and enjoying life. I hope you are living in a part of the world where a peaceful environment is not like an unfulfilled dream. Most importantly, I really hope you are living with your beloved family, friends, and people who are close to you, and that you have no concerns about their safety. Let me tell you a little bit about the part of the world I am coming from. The problems are numerous and people are stressed and helpless. Some people struggle even more; it depends where they come from, which language they speak, and what skin tone they have, which is shocking, right? I know it is, and it boggles my mind too. I have countless questions to that regard; however, I have not been able to find answers to my questions yet. Let me briefly describe an incident that took place in Afghanistan lately which was absolutely horrible and heart-wrenching. There was a wedding ceremony, so a large number of people went to the wedding to have fun and wish joyous moments to the newly married couple. The wedding party soon turned into a heart-breaking event which took many lives in such a short period of time and left many families in grief. The media claims that at least 63 people were killed including women and young children, and many people were severely wounded. Oh, I forgot to mention that a bomb explosion took place in the middle of the wedding. I can only imagine how terrified, concerned, and helpless the children, women, and everyone else were at that moment. I could only watch a couple of videos where parents expressed their unbearable pain, since they are immensely graphic. A family lost six members of its own which shatters my heart into pieces. It makes me question the existence of humanity. It again reminds me how peace has been only a dream for my people and my country for years; a dream that seems impossible to come true. This is only one example of the incident, but similar incidents happened before and continue to happen. The part of world I am coming from, humans' lives are not

equally valued, but I hope people's lives equally matter regardless of their place of origin, language, and skin tone where you live. You may wonder what I mean by saying humans' lives are not equally valued. I promise it is not a false claim, I wish it was. Incidents get reported selectively and it depends on the place it takes place. It drives me crazy when I continuously witness the same pattern over and over. One incident will be covered on social media for months. On the other hand, similar incidents or even more tragic ones are completely ignored. That ignorance implies that those ongoing explosions are expected in certain part of the world. Therefore, the media and people have no obligations to take actions. As result of those never-ending problems, people are forced to leave everything behind and run for a better life. While everything is uncertain about their futures, they are hopeful to experience peace for the very first time if they are lucky enough to make it to their final destinations and if that specific country believes how horrible the situation is for them. As if, the world is not aware what is going on where they come from. As much as we claim that humanity exists and people's lives matter equally, the reality suggests otherwise. I wish it was just a nightmare, but it is the frightening reality that people are willing to ignore. I wish that you are not going through the same experience as I and many other people are going through. I am very eager and curious to hear about your part of the world from you. Dear humanity, I want more of you in the world and looking forward to hearing your story soon.

Sincerely yours,

Fatima Haidari
August 31/2019

Photography by Ayan Ismail



On Healing from Trauma...

A Poetry Collection by Ijeoma Umebinyuo

Submitted by Ayan Ismail

“ I am learning to be patient
with my healing,
And ever to close my
mouth when my scars
scream.
I am learning to be patient
with my healing,
And never to carry fire
when all I want to do is
feast on water and silence. ”

“ Healing comes in waves,
and maybe today
the wave hits the rock,
and that’s ok,
that’s ok darling.
you are still healing
you are still healing. ”

“ I carried many storms with me.
I have washed myself ashore.
I have been my tide and lighthouse.
Darling, this becoming me didn’t come easy.
I have let my demons play. I have cursed god in 3 languages. Forgive me.
I have peeled my flesh to reveal broken angels pressed onto my soul.
I am my night and my sunshine.
I have let my screams deafen me at night.
In darkness, I swear I have seen the devil begging me to end it all.
I have patched myself slowly, gone to war and won myself back.
So, here I am.
Here I am. I am not asking to be validated.
Here I am. I am not asking to be protected.
Here I am. I am not begging to be loved.
I am here. I am here and that’s enough to be celebrated. That is enough.
Darling, I am here. I am a glorious cause for celebration. ”

Photography by Golsa Golestaneh





ALL RIGHTS RESERVED BY THE CONTRIBUTORS OF BEATS: NEWCOMER YOUTH VOICE + PERSPECTIVE