

Be it the journey to Canada for the first time—one potentially associated with turmoil, grief and hope—or the daily commute to work, transportation is an essential and complex part of our lives. In this module we talk about how participants came to Canada, their experiences with transit in Canada, and how this compares to the ways people get around in their countries of origin. We consider the lasting impact of the journeys immigrants take, barriers and complications associated with everyday transportation, and how one can become familiar with their new surroundings and neighbours on foot, bike, car or public transit.

For many of the interviewees, their journeys to Canada were not direct. Two South Asian participants lived with their families in the Middle East to take advantage of job opportunities before moving to Canada to access greater social security. A Hungarian refugee escaped into Yugoslavia with her mother and brother before being reunited with her father in Canada; unlike her father who travelled across the Atlantic by boat, they were flown first class to Canada.

The videos reveal how newcomers must adjust to a new climate and geography, and familiarize themselves with local transit systems before feeling comfortable travelling locally and nationally. One family settled in Edmonton because the father arrived in Canada ahead of the rest of the family and took the train from Halifax until he had had enough and got off the train in Alberta. Two interviewees participated in CultureLink's Bike Host program which allowed them to learn to safely cycle in Toronto, build a social network with other participants and get to know the city. Many *Collective Threads* interviewees praised the ease of getting around Toronto by transit, car and bicycle as compared with their experiences of crowded trains and streets in their home countries.

Discussion Questions

1. As a newcomer, do any of the stories featured in this module resonate with your own experience? Why or why not? How did you travel to Canada? How do you get around in your city or town?
2. Discuss the benefits of different modes of transportation. Why might you walk or bike rather than drive or take public transit?
3. Organize a walking tour or bike trip to explore a new section of your city or town. If possible, connect with a local organization or individual that can share insight about the history or day to day happenings of that place.
4. As an English learning activity, invite students to write the meanings of common traffic signs next to their images.
5. Examine local, provincial and national maps. How do the routes of highways, roads and trains reflect the local geography?
6. While all the interviewees live in Toronto and find it easy to get around in the city on a day to day basis, this is not the reality for all Canadians. Discuss how geography, climate, income and infrastructure prevent Canadians in other parts of the country from getting around efficiently.

Related Resources

Bicycling in Toronto:

Bike Host matches up newcomers interested in cycling with mentors who ride regularly; the program offers opportunities to practice communication skills and get comfortable biking on Toronto's streets.

www.culturelink.ca/bike-host

Cycle Toronto offers workshops on topics that include safe cycling, sharing the road, commuting in messy weather and bike maintenance, as well as the *Toronto Cyclist Handbook*, available in 13 languages through their website.

www.cycleto.ca

Buying a car:

Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council offers tips for buying a car from a registered dealer or through a private sale; a multilingual translation service is available in over 150 languages at no cost.

www.omvic.on.ca/portal/Consumers.aspx

Canadian Automobile Association provides information about selecting the right vehicle.

www.caasco.com/Auto/Buying-a-Car/Buying-a-New-Vehicle/Things-to-know-before-you-buy.aspx

Public transit:

The Toronto Transit Commission's Frequently Asked Questions page offers clear answers to basic questions about using Toronto's public transit system; TripPlanner can help you plan your route.

www.ttc.ca/Riding_the_TTC/Frequently_Asked_Questions/Service_Information.jsp

www.ttc.ca/Trip_planner/index.jsp

Walking:

Jane's Walk offers community-led walking tours in the neighbourhoods of Toronto to help build community and to make space for everyone to observe, reflect, share, question and collectively re-imagine the places around us.

janeswalk.org/canada/toronto

City of Toronto Self Guided Toronto Walks offer recommended routes and maps to explore the City's parks, waterways, heritage and public art.

www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=18b6f7e2b0dc1410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnnextchannel=8fa08b7a29891410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD