

The Integration of Skilled Migrants Into the New Zealand Workforce and Society

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Appendix 1: Interview transcripts

This appendix comprises the edited transcripts of interviews with ten recent migrants to New Zealand. Each transcript was read and approved by the interviewees, who have been assigned pseudonyms.

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A Researcher and Policy Analyst from Madras

My name is Chitra. I am 41 years old and I came from Madras. In India I had my own research firm which I had set up with three colleagues. When we decided to come to New Zealand, it was by no means because the situation was bad in India. We were very settled, well off financially, so there was absolutely no reason to leave. The reason we did decide to emigrate was that both my husband and I have always felt the need to broaden our experiences in some way, a bit like what New Zealanders do when they decide to do their OE. We flirted with the idea of migrating but we didn't really think about it seriously because we had family commitments and obligations and there was no history of migration in either of our families.

But a friend of mine from Bombay had just gone through the Hindu-Muslim riots in the 1990s and so he was a bit frustrated and upset and didn't want his children to grow up in that sort of environment and so he had worked through his residency for New Zealand, got it, come here, loved it and subsequently came back to India. Interestingly, he didn't migrate in the end but he was a very dear friend of mine and he kept saying "You know, you really must explore the opportunity. Just do the paperwork, get the visa and then you can think about it". And so we thought "Oh well, we can just do the paperwork and see what happens". And then one thing led to another and before we knew it we had our visas. And then we thought "Oh well, we can just go and see the country and see if we like it." So we came here for a two week visit, loved it, went back to India and made the decision to migrate. That was in March 1998. My husband came first to look for work and find us a place to live and my daughter and I followed in June.

We applied to immigration under my name because I am younger. When we put in our application, it was just like it had to happen. We completed our self-assessment which showed we had the requisite number of points and sent it off. Then we moved house because my father-in-law died and so we moved in to look after my mother-in-law. The reply arrived at our old address. Well, in India, when mail goes to the wrong address you can say goodbye to it. But then this gentleman who was our old neighbour

called my husband and said “There is something come from New Zealand” so we asked him to redirect it and it *arrived* – it was really so surprising!

We submitted our documents in October 1996, I remember it because it was Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday, and we never heard back from them for a long time. There was a national postal strike in India at that time. Then in December my husband went to Delhi for work and he just called in at the Immigration Office to find out if anything was happening about our application and they said “We have been waiting for your passports - we sent you a letter on the 15th of October”. That means they had processed our application in two weeks! So then we thought “this is meant to be”.

So we got our visas and waited because they were valid for a year. We came just two weeks prior to when it expired and then went back which meant we could return any time in the next two years. But then we decided that if we were going to move we should do it sooner rather than later because we were getting on in years – we were both in our mid-thirties. At this time my sister-in-law returned from the Middle East and said she was happy to care for my mother-in-law; so this gave us the freedom to explore the New Zealand option.

We came straight to Wellington because when we had come for that two-week period we spent one week in Auckland and one week in Wellington. There was no question in our mind that Wellington was where we had to be. The landscape was different from anything that we had ever seen and since we were making a transition for a different experience then we wanted to go to the extreme. Auckland looked too much like Bombay to me. Wellington looked small and quaint.

The pack we had received from the Immigration Service (with the documents we had to fill in to apply) had information in it about settling down in New Zealand but there was absolutely no information in it about the job market so in retrospect, our decision to migrate seems almost foolish! We gave up our jobs, I sold my shares in the company because when we moved we thought we had to give it 100%. It was like cutting our bridges to back home - not emotionally, but in a labour market sense.

At that time we were not allowed to bring any money out of India because India's regulations were quite strict on foreign exchange. We were only allowed to take something like \$US3,000 each. So we came here, and of course we didn't get work. We had to go on the unemployment benefit and that is how we survived. I don't think I would have made the transition if I hadn't been able to get the dole. I could not have survived on that \$US3,000 for very long.

I actually had an interview set up before I came because my husband came across a really interesting advertisement in a market research firm – and he called them up and said “My wife has this set of skills” and they said “Please get her to contact us the moment she arrives”. So in that first week I had a meeting set up. But I didn't get a job for seven months. I have a whole pile of rejection letters in my cupboard. I keep them for future reference – it's my reality check. I received about 90 letters, my husband received about 120! It was very disheartening as we never knew why we were not being considered for jobs for which we had an ideal fit..

When we got the dole, part of the requirement was that we had to fill out a questionnaire asking about your motivation for seeking work. And then you were given a case officer that you had to meet every two or three weeks. So I would go and meet with him. But he was not able to help people with high skills, you know? He said to me, “I can't fault your motivation but I really can't find you anything, you have got to look on your own”. Look on my own - where? I was new to the country and I didn't know anybody, I had no connections and I didn't have a computer. I had no idea where to go. But I had to keep reporting to him on what I had been doing to find work.

I was doing everything – I called all the market research firms in Wellington and Auckland. I looked at the job ads in the newspaper – all kinds of jobs because I realised after the first month that maybe I needed to widen my strategy. So I applied for admin jobs, coordinating jobs - I applied for anything that I felt would leverage some parts of my skills. Later I went to employment consulting firms – Morgan and Banks and others - I went to them all. But the big drawback with these employment consulting firms is that I don't think they actually *market* their candidates. What they are doing is , they look for a ready fit – they are just matching agencies. They are just like WINZ really but for high skilled candidates. And that's what frustrated me – how come they

are not able to see what my skills are and then go about finding job opportunities that fit those skills?

I was doing everything I was told to do. People told me it is very important when you apply for a job that you follow it up with a call so they hear your voice. I do realise when they see an unfamiliar name – people get put off, you know? They don't know if you can even speak the language. So I always called them up. And once, this man said to me “You know I am really amazed at how well you speak English but do you *think* in English” and I asked “Why is that important?” And he said “Well when you are doing interviews there mustn't be any lag in the conversation, when you ask a question.” I immediately knew that here was a person who cannot think in more than one language. So I asked him if he thought there was any delay in our conversation and he said “No” And I said, “So that should tell you something”.

Even after I got my current job, when I went to a meeting with a manager of a firm in the East Cape, he heard my name and said “I am not going to even try saying it, I am going to call you Wendy”! I was unsure as to how to respond and so I said to him “You don't have to call me anything”. I didn't take offence at his comment as some of our names are complex and unusually long. But he didn't even give it a go – that upset me.

By the end of the year I was becoming depressed. I didn't have any friends, the phone never rang, and nobody came to my house. It was very depressing and very socially isolating. I was feeling undermined, undervalued. I started to wonder, “Do I really want to live in a society that asks me every time they meet me do I speak English Where every time I had to justify my background, my skills?” I don't think I will ever get over the fact that people will still ask me whether I speak English. I notice people sometimes speak a bit slowly because they think I won't get it.

I felt at that time, and I am sure this is still the case, that employers here have absolutely no idea about skilled migrants from India. They didn't know, for example, that all of us do our qualifications in English and that in our entire work culture English is the primary means of communication. As a result, I had to constantly justify myself. I really found that humiliating. To some extent that is understandable. I mean let's face it, there is a huge variability in the Indian education system so I can understand their

anxiety, but I felt that if NZQA had given my qualifications the stamp, then that should be taken into consideration. I thought when I told employers that I had permanent residency that would mean that my qualifications had been verified. I thought there was a mismatch between the Immigration Service and employers. I don't think new Zealand employers have the mindset to cope with the ethnic diversity that immigration brings.

You know, I don't want to sound arrogant but when I was in India, I had a job, I was rich, I had my company and my house, a chauffeur and a maid - everything. And then to come here and have to manage everything on my own and then to have to ask for a handout of money ... I was desperate to get off the dole. That was what was so humiliating about those seven months. I don't know how I would have felt if it had taken me longer to get a job.

I actively built networks with the Indian community and they were very supportive. They told me not to give up. But their situation was quite different. They all came from the Middle East and they came here with jobs and money. But they were very encouraging and told me to hang in there and things would come right and eventually they did.

I got involved in some community organisations and my husband did too - in UNICEF and in the Aotearoa Peace Movement. And we both used that as a way to build some networks and connections and to get some local experience. Through them I got involved in a research project and they used me, as a volunteer, to oversee the research process. That was fascinating because I got to meet some very impressive people and I got to see how things are done here, and ultimately that was the only way I could get local referees. You see, that was another problem - when we submitted our applications for jobs I think that, what was putting people off was, we had *international* referees and people don't want to call India.

But by November it was reaching a point where it was really, really hard. We were trying to live on \$150 a week, and it was really stressful. And so I started to think we should go back because here we were in our most productive years and we were unemployed.

And then in November I got very close to getting a job, on a specially funded justice programme. What happened was that I called up this consulting firm and he said to me that my background sounded absolutely perfect and asked me to send him my CV. And he absolutely loved it. He said he had selected six applicants and was going to go to submit them to the programme manager and would keep me posted. I was one of two picked for an interview. The interview went really, really well but it was quite clear that the fact that I didn't have any New Zealand experience was a problem. I so badly wanted that job, you know? But I thought I wouldn't get it. And then the consultant called my back and said that I didn't and the reason was that it was a programme that was very politically sensitive and they felt unsure about putting someone with no New Zealand experience in that position. I can understand that from a rational perspective. But I was very, very let down. The interview panel gave very positive feedback and the consultant said to me, "Take a break in December and come January, I am sure I will have another interview lined up for you". And he did! And I got it!

That was in February 1999. My husband signed up to do a Masters at Victoria which is what he really wanted to do but we could only do it if one of us was employed. And then, he got a job a year later after he finished.

I have a lot of social interactions now. Over the years we have built up a really good network. I have made some friends at work and my husband made some friends when he was doing his Masters. I think we integrated quite easily once we had established some networks.

I feel, and both my husband and I feel the same, that part of our cultural experience and our journey is also to encourage New Zealanders to experience India. So we do. One of my friends and her partner travelled to India and they decided to get married there. So we arranged their wedding and her parents and his parents came from Invercargill and we played their hosts. And I took another New Zealand friend and his partner with me when I visited my family recently. We are always putting people in touch with friends in India that they can stay with. It's an opportunity to give people a slice of India that they wouldn't have access to if they were travelling as tourists. So for me that is an opportunity. I think that one of the reasons for my husband and I to be here is that we provide a sort of a bridge between our two countries.

Last year Diwali, the Festival of Lights was celebrated at Parliament and that was fantastic. That to me is the ultimate sign that we are being accepted. I see a lot more celebration of cultures in this country than I saw six years ago. The Wellington City Council has hosted Diwali and there are so many cultural shows that happen now. So to me, New Zealand is now like home. But India will also always be my home. That is the beauty of our lives – that we will always have two countries that we feel equally at home in. That is what I want to give my daughter as well and that is why we encourage her to continue to learn Tamil and we take her back every two years because I want her to feel comfortable in both cultures.

You know this is the problem that most migrants have – migrant kids particularly – they look Indian but they don't feel Indian because they are Kiwis at heart. But what my husband and I have always told my daughter is you will always *look* Indian which means that you will always be *seen* as Indian. And whether or not you feel Kiwi, society is going to refer to you as an Indian. First they will ask you “Where are you from?” If you say “New Zealand”, they will ask, “No, where are you *originally* from?” So the more comfortable you are with that identity, the better it is for you. That is the richness you have - integrate both and be happy with both. And she is. She is now twelve and in December we are sending her back for her school holidays on her own for the first time. She will spend some time with family and she is so looking forward to it. I think that how we have conveyed the country and its values to her has been important. We didn't leave India because we were unhappy in India - that has been a big advantage.

I see New Zealanders as being quite insular, a bit whingey but on the whole decent people. I wouldn't say they are discriminatory at all because my experiences have been very positive. Even when I was trying to get a job, I didn't feel it was discriminatory that I wasn't getting work. Only now, when I talk to other New Zealanders about it, I realise that it *might* have been discriminatory. But at the time I felt it was my lack of local experience, or that they just didn't understand my qualifications. Why would you want to give someone a job who had a degree from the University of Madras compared to Otago University – why take the risk? And that's another thing about New Zealanders – they are not risk takers. Employers have a risk-averse perspective.

This has been my first real opportunity to live in what I would call a white man's country. My only interaction prior to that was when I travelled to the UK for a very short while. I remember sitting in Madras airport, because I travelled a lot when I was in India, and I would watch many foreigners travelling in and out of the country and always wondered, "Are they like us? Do they worry about their families? How do they see my country?" So I had these same questions when I first came here. And through my social interactions I have found that beneath the surface, we are all alike. We have similar worries, anxieties about ageing parents, dysfunctional families and the world.

One thing that took me by surprise about New Zealand was, well, Indian work places are very social places, I mean, Indians by and large are very social people. We don't distinguish between work and family and home – everything is integrated. So it took me a little bit of time to come to terms with the way people here protect their home from their work. While people were very friendly at work, they never invited me home after work. It took me a long time to break through that barrier. That was very hard for me because when you are spending eight hours of your conscious, intellectual time among people who have that same level of intellect how can you not be friends, you know? So I actively tried to encourage people to come to my home and socialise and I think that has made a big difference as well.

Another thing that surprised me was the "bring a plate" culture – I just didn't understand that at all. In India, when you invited people to your home, you just went there and ate their food because it was their turn to show their hospitality. So this whole notion of "Can I bring something ...?" I mean, it works, and I understand that environment now because of the pressures on time and in India you have maids to do your cooking for you. But that was a bit different.

As a migrant, you have a completely different history. When people talk about books, I don't even know these books – people's frame of reference is different. The government department I work for has a staff quiz once a year, I can never participate, because there is no question I know – all the questions are specific to New Zealand or British culture – not one question about international events and issues. That is very isolating

My daughter loves it here – she is very well settled. The friends that she made at primary school are still her friends and I have got to know their parents and realised that they are all concerned about the same things that I am. So now it is not just the girls who are friends, but the parents are friends too. We look after each other's kids. She is very, very happy. She loves school and she is as kiwi as you can find – she has a real kiwi accent. When we went to India last December, she went to her cousin's school. Her cousin had talked non-stop about her cousin in New Zealand and for Indians, you know, New Zealand is a quaint, far-away country. And so the Headmaster asked her cousin to bring her along to school for a day. So she did, and my daughter got asked to talk about New Zealand and she got asked to speak in her kiwi accent and she sang the national anthem in Maori – really! It was interesting for her to experience her duality. She felt very proud!

In New Zealand you can't just shoot your mouth off. In India, you can just say what you want and everybody understands where you are coming from. Here, people are a little bit more politically correct and don't really say what they are thinking about sensitive issues – like the Civil Union Bill, or National versus Labour, or Maori and Treaty issues. People don't really talk about contentious issues. If I am speaking with somebody, I like to know, I like to understand where they are coming from. New Zealanders are anxious about offending people but with my friends I have broached all these topics because that is what relationships are all about. I think they signal people's value base and strong relationships are based on shared values.

I didn't know about the Treaty before I came. It took me a long time to understand the issues about the Treaty, about biculturalism. It is a complicated issue, you know? And so how else am I going to understand it if I don't talk to people about it? I mean there is no problem reading the Treaty and understanding the Principles but why is it an issue? What were the circumstances when the Treaty came about? The fact that the Treaty was only signed by so many chiefs and not everybody. But we were very fortunate in that when my husband first came to New Zealand he flatted with a guy whose girlfriend at the time was a bilingual lawyer. My husband invited them to our place for dinner and she was able to, over time explain to me what the Maori issues were. Because of that, I found that my appreciation of Maori issues was much better than members of my own migrant community who had been here for some time.

This is the interesting thing about migrant communities, especially skilled migrant communities. When they come to New Zealand, for example, (and most of them have come with jobs) they see themselves as economically contributing to this society and so they see it as their right to determine how their taxes get spent. Also, coming from an Indian society where you have to fight for every opportunity that you get, where there is no welfare system, migrants often ask: “Why are we giving our money to these beneficiaries? They should go and find jobs – don’t they do that in India?” See this is what happens, they transpose their values into a society that is totally different in terms of philosophy and ideology. And then they do the same with Maori. They say, “Well isn’t that just like the caste system in India, and look at what happened as a consequence of that!” Because you know, in India you have positive discrimination for people in lower caste groups and as a consequence, recruitment into jobs or admissions into educational institutions was not always based on merit. But excuse me, this is a Treaty issue you are talking about. There is a document.

You find among migrants that there is a lack of appreciation of the social nature and the ideology of their adoptive country. That’s why migrants end up being isolated - they want to retain their Indian-ness as much as possible. But I was not wanting to do that, even in India. I didn’t come all this way to be Indian. I have come all this way to experience the world. I will always *be* Indian but I don’t want to retain my Indian-ness *to the core*. I want it to evolve and grow with new experiences because that *is India*, you know? No identity is static.

Indians have difficulty dealing with their teenagers in an environment that is so different to what we grew up in. We come from a society where we don’t talk back to our parents. We are much more duty bound, we expect a level of obedience and respect from our kids. But of course, the kids in New Zealand are growing up in a different environment. They grow up with a questioning attitude. So one of the challenges for us is that as the kids grow up, how do we stay relevant in our teenage child’s life? They don’t physically need us any more. Unless we change and modernise and participate in the society which they are part of, we are going to be left high and dry. That is where the generation gap is going to come from - not from having battles over what to wear – that was the generation gap of my generation. The battle with my daughter is not

whether or not she should wear jeans but whether she should participate in internet chat rooms. The issues are much more complex. But if I want my daughter to stay committed to me, as a parent the challenge is mine. I must find how I can add value, and be relevant to her life so that she will want to be part of this family and stay committed to it.

I am a policy evaluator with the public sector and I have now been in this job for over six years. I love it, it is using all my skills and it has given me the opportunity to understand New Zealand society. In retrospect, if I had gone into a market research job I would have continued to leverage my research skills and apply them in a range of contexts, but working in the public service has given me much more insight into New Zealand society and that helps me understand the system and why it works in a particular way. I am very happy living in New Zealand but I can tell you now after my experience here, that no amount of clean air and water is going to compensate for lack of intellectual stimulation. So for me if I didn't have a perfect, stimulating, demanding job, I wouldn't stay. I'd rather live in Madras.

An Electrician from Zimbabwe

My name is Richard and I'm from Zimbabwe. I qualified as an electrician in the early 1970's. I've also been farming for approximately 15 years. I'm 52 years old.

When I decided to leave Zimbabwe, I can only describe it as chaotic. The Government had embarked on a land distribution exercise which entailed taking farms from the whites and redistributing it to the peasant black farmers. It was not structured, it was just a chaotic takeover of land that wasn't arable. It was totally crazy the way they did everything. My farm was one that was taken and I subsequently found myself without an income, after working for so long. It was hard.

I share-managed with a partner, I didn't own the farm wholly. We were kicked off in November 2001. We subsequently leased three properties adjoining our property that hadn't been affected at the time. But remote farming from a little town 260-odd kilometres away was just impossible and it got increasingly difficult with these fellows. Every time you went up there, there was an issue - an illegal roadblock, you were threatened with your life or whatever, it was just too stressful.

Do you know any history about Rhodesia and Zimbabwe? We went through 15 years of war. I saw horrific things in that war. The war was over in 1980 and then Mugabe took over and proceeded with ethnic cleansing. So essentially the sanctions on the country were gone and there was petrol to be had, and luxuries that we didn't have before, but we still had a form of war going on in the country where you had bandits running all over the place. So we've been in a state of conflict for years. And then, just when the economy seemed to be coming right, they started this land invasion thing, and that was horrific.

We had a child raped on the farm and I phoned the police and told them. First of all they couldn't respond because they didn't have a vehicle. They requested that I go and fetch them. Then they asked me if I knew who it was. When I told them it was a war veteran, they said, "Sorry, it's political, we can't interfere." I said, "Well, what does a

four year old know about politics?” So, anything to do with the veterans, you had no back-up from the police. I mean, the first two (people?) that were killed in that conflict were pulled out of a police station, and the police didn’t lift a finger to defend them. They were actually shot in the car park of the police station. Effectively, for a white man, or anybody of the opposition, you had no recourse to law in the courts or the police. So it was hairy, it was real hairy.

My eldest son got a job here in Te Awamutu through an employment agency. He had an interview over the telephone, got the job, came over, organised the work permit, and started on a dairy farm outside Te Awamutu. Being a pretty close family it was hard to see him go, and that kicked us into gear. We thought about it all and decided that as long as our daughter was prepared to come with us, we were prepared to just lose everything, and come. At the time New Zealand and I think Canada were the only two countries that weren’t putting visa restrictions on us and I actually got a job through the internet. A friend gave me an email address that he found on the internet. He told me to give it a go, and not to be despondent, because he’d emailed many people and hadn’t had replies from a lot of them. He said, “Just start with this one.” I started with that one and finished with that one. I got the address on the Monday and by Friday, this farmer from Levin offered me a job which I promptly took. We did the deal over the telephone. It was quite amazing.

There is no New Zealand Embassy in Zimbabwe. We just found out from friends that we didn’t need a visa, so basically we didn’t know what we were coming to. It was a chance. We had no official document to give us any guidelines. We had no idea, apart from what our son had said. He’d pretty much faced no trouble. We just took a gamble. We paid for the tickets - it was all or nothing.

I sold everything and we flew over here. It took us 6 weeks to close all our affairs, and sort everything out - sell everything, pay labour, get all the cattle (about 2000 head of cattle) sorted out and booked in for slaughter, and get over here. But we did it and we have no regrets.

I had to leave a lot of things behind. We got on the plane with suitcases and I think between all of us about \$3000US, because foreign currency was impossible to get in Zimbabwe. They just didn't have it. You had to get it on the black market which was pretty horrific because the government had a lot of agents on the street trying to stop the illegal trade in foreign currency. But if you can't get it from the bank, desperate as we were, that's how we did it.

(The farmer's wife) met us at the Wellington airport at 1 30 on the morning of the 10th of July, 2002, and drove us home. We got to the farm about 3 o'clock and I was woken at half past ten that same morning to go for a look around the farm. The farmer showed me what the job was, gave me a car, and sent me off to get a work permit with a letter stating that he'd given me a job. I went through to Palmerston North to lodge an application for a work permit which they posted to me about 3 days later.

After what we'd experienced at home with Immigration, we just couldn't believe the efficiency that we experienced, it was just a delight for us coming from a third world country. To get anything from Immigration in Zimbabwe you stood in queues for a day or 2 days. In New Zealand, we went into Immigration and were through in 15 or 20 minutes!

I worked on the farm for a year and a half. (The farmer) was in his seventies and the farm was getting too much for him so he decided to lease half the farm which left me with not a lot to do. So, I went and saw Immigration and asked if I could do part time electrical and they informed me that the country was quite short of electricians, so it wouldn't be a problem. They gave me an open permit to work for a local electrical firm - I'd met the owner through the church we were in. I worked three afternoons a week for him, until September 2003. Then (the farmer) and I sat down and discussed the situation and we thought it'd be better if I went full-time electrical. So I did.

I'd already approached the electrical workers' registration board and given them my credentials as an electrician, and they gave me a temporary licence and requested that I complete the theory exam and regulation exam and do Practical 1, 2 and 3. I've done the practical part and passed that. The theory and regulations I've failed once. I've just

redone them and I think I've failed again. I'm battling, I really am. I did an Open Polytech course here, by correspondence, and in my four assignments for theory I got 92, 88, 82 and 78 percent. For my regulations I got 88 and 78 I think. But when I get into exams I just go blank. I'm really battling. The only other option I've got is to take those Open Polytech results to the board and plead with them for some sort of favour. Otherwise I'm going to have to go back farming I think. And I'm quite enjoying the electrical work.

The Immigration Department was very helpful. Compared to what we're used to, it's like chalk and cheese. They've not refused the permit - we've just had to apply for another one. You're aware of the new law with the expression of interest? You can't just apply for a residency permit. You fill in an expression of interest. And you have to have over 100 points to be considered and then if they find it favourable, they invite you to apply for a residency permit. If they invite you to apply for a permit, then you're pretty much in luck, provided all the information you've given on the expression of interest can be backed up with documentation.

Well, a little bit because of my age and because I don't have a recognised New Zealand electrical qualification, I had, I think, 120 points. But because of the high number of people who qualify for consideration over 100 points the Immigration Department started considering those at about 210 and they are slowly working down. At 100 they've got dozens, heaps. The original letter we got said that it would take between six and eight weeks for them to check all the documentation. That was in September 2003. They subsequently advised it's going to take longer than they anticipated because of the high volume. And now they have told us not to expect to hear before January or February. So, for us, it's pretty ..., you know. When you're 20, you've got the rest of your life ahead of you, but when you're 52, each month is closer to retirement.

I'm not sure if getting a New Zealand Trade Certificate will increase my chances of getting residency because the expression of interest has already been accepted. But it'll help me financially because my pay would be increased and I could get on with my life basically. At the moment, I'm almost treated like an apprentice, and I can't sign off any new wiring and that. So, I'll wait for these exam results. I might, by some miracle have

passed. The thing is, I need 60 points. The last theory exam I wrote in Regulations, I got 54 points. With Regulations, it's an open book exam which is a lot more comfortable for me, but I write so slowly, and although you've got three hours, I just run out of time. The thing is, you can only do the exams every six months, and again, when you're 20, six months is nothing -when you're 52, six months is an eternity.

It's a bit of a frustration for me, personally. I can understand the need to test on Regulations because your building codes are a lot different to ours. You have wooden houses, which I didn't believe when someone told me. I said, "That was when they had the settlers that they built in wood!" We had brick and concrete houses at home, and so I can understand the need to be tested on the regulations. But theory! Theory's the same all over the world. The strange thing is that when I started my course, some of the things we covered, I thought, "Gee wiz, I did this years ago but I've forgotten." And I went and asked my work colleagues how they would answer the questions and they hadn't a clue either!

I had to re-sit my driver's licence too. Fortunately I had a South African driver's licence, so I didn't have to do the driving test, but I had to sit the theory again. I pretty much sailed through that because it was multiple choice, and you just sit in the corner there, but I was real worried about it.

I've moved the whole family across. That was a condition of us coming. I wasn't prepared for my kids to be somewhere else. It's bad enough that my sisters and brothers ... Well, my sister's in England, my brothers and a sister in South Africa, a brother in Zimbabwe and me in New Zealand. It's distressing when I think that there's a good possibility that I might never see all my family again. But I wasn't prepared for that to happen to my immediate family, my kids and my grand kid. So they're all here with us. That's softened the blow a lot.

I've got my wife and my younger son living with us. He's 20. That's another frustration we have. He's 20 and he falls under our umbrella. He can get a work permit, but it would mean that he would have to apply for a residency permit off his own bat and he has no qualifications, so he wouldn't even get to 10 points on the

current system. We've kept him at home on the advice of Immigration so that when I get a resident's permit, he automatically falls under my umbrella. My daughter lives in Levin. She's got a little flat, works for (an energy supplier) and she's got a little child. So it's going to be a little bit more difficult for her to get a resident's permit. But because of New Zealand's strong belief in family, if my wife and I have residency permits when she applies, it'll be a lot easier for her. So there's a lot hanging on my getting residency – if I lose, my family loses too. I can't think about that. If I get turned down for residency, I'd get on my hands and knees in front of the Minister of Immigration.

It's been a tough two and a half years. When it's over – well, I don't touch alcohol but I think I might have a beer that day! I just said to someone yesterday that it's hard having to give up your entire identity. Really, that's effectively what we've done. If *you* decided you wanted to go to live in Australia and off you went, then two years later you decided, "No, this is not for me, I'm going home," you could just jump on a plane and come back to New Zealand. You could do that. Whereas, well I *could* go back to Zimbabwe, but I'd be going back to inflation of 700 per cent. And with an unemployment rate of 70 per cent my likelihood at 52 of getting a job So, effectively I'd be condemned to ... well, I don't even want to think about it.

And it would be dangerous to go back because we've been living in a country that has condemned the government of Zimbabwe's human rights record – there's a number of issues that the government has taken up with the Zimbabwean Government. I will be a suspect. The recent news from Zimbabwe is that there were 10 asylum seekers sent back from England, back to Zimbabwe, and the Minister for Information has said, "Those 10 you need to watch, because Britain is busy trying to take over Zimbabwe." I mean, that's ludicrous. But the British government has condemned those 10 to untold miseries. The law enforcement agencies and the Central Intelligence Organisation's going to hassle them. They're going to think they've been trained by Britain and sent back on the pretext that they were asylum seekers. So, this is the predicament I face. Believe me I was beaten by the CIO in 1984 because they found out that I'd been in the permanent army. They beat me for 6 hours. It was horrific. This is what you're dealing with.

In New Zealand - the freedom that you have here, the country that you have, the freedom of choice, the freedom to walk outside your gate! I hear guys complain about the weather, it doesn't bother me. You know, like I say, back home, my car would be locked and it'd have an alarm on it, and it'd have an immobiliser, and I'd have locked the gate behind me. And the windows would all have burglar guards, and access to the bedrooms would have a big wrought iron gate that you lock at night when you go to bed. I had a full grown cheetah that lived in my garden. We had an eight foot security fence to keep these war vets out, they were petrified of the thing. Africa's a harsh country. It's a beautiful country in a lot of aspects, but it's a really, really hard country to live in.

The New Zealand people have made it so much easier to start a new life here. I mean, I haven't had a bad experience with a Kiwi yet. Not driving, not shopping, not job hunting, not anything. We've been treated almost like royalty. My sister's in England. She still does not have a friend that's English. The only friends she has are ex-Zimbabweans. She says the English people are so unfriendly.. You can't stop and talk in a supermarket. Whereas, I mean, I've walked in the supermarket here and I tell you, I've greeted a Kiwi and the next thing, you're talking to them. It's remarkable.

We belong to the Baptist Church in Levin. We've got a number of friends there. I have also made friends through fishing. In fact I've got a very, very good friend that lives down in Whitby. We were standing on the beach at Foxton, and I went alongside and asked him if he'd caught anything. That was two years ago, and we've become very, very good friends. They're wonderful people. In fact, we were at their fiftieth birthday last Sunday. I'm a pretty outgoing sort of person, always have been. Our first weekend in New Zealand, a family popped in to see if they could do anything for us and they've become really, really wonderful friend of ours. Kiwis are just so easygoing people. I've got a friend from the church with a batch up in the back of beyond. He wants us to go and spend a couple of days with him at New Year. We are really looking forward to it.

(My wife) and I, were brought up in a very rural environment away from cities. I hate cities. No chance you're going to get me to work in Auckland or Wellington. Little towns out back of beyond is what suits us. I love fishing, the outdoors, the bush, the

peace and quiet. We've got all these new bird species to learn. All these new tree species to learn. There's new fish to learn about. We've got a whole new world to learn. We count ourselves privileged to have lived amongst elephant and cheetahs and lion and rhino (our farm was part of a black rhino conservancy) but we've moved on. We've got a new life. I speak four languages. If I wanted to learn Maori, there's that opportunity. I believe it's quite difficult but I might try it. You know, I just need to get a lot of other issues out of my way. But, all these trees, and the birds, we've already got bird books and tree books, and we'll start that. We'll get into a wildlife society of some sort.

There's a whole new world to learn and that's one exciting thing at my age. So, we count our blessings. We've left behind what we've had, let's get on with life. That's what I'm asking. I've been given that opportunity. It's like we've died and gone to heaven.

Economic Development Advisor and International Citizen

My name is Tony. I am 55 years old and I have a Bachelors in Animal Science and a Masters in International Administration. I am currently employed as an economic advisor in a local authority.

I was born in the United States but as a young person I decided that I wanted to live and work in other cultures. I never wanted to be a tourist - so I orientated myself towards that as I started my studies. Since finishing my first degree thirty years ago, I have travelled from one country to another, working on contract as a project manager in both economic and enterprise development. I regard myself as an international citizen.

I migrated to New Zealand from South Africa where I and my family had been living for the seven years prior. Life in South Africa had got to the point where it was very, very unsafe. We had no surety about our economic future whatsoever and we found it more and more difficult to live there. That was a shame because we were very committed to being part of the democratic changes that were taking place. But we really didn't think that the social equity that everybody was talking about would ever take place in our life-time or even in our children's lifetime and because the country was so racially polarised it was almost inevitable that there would be no future for our children there. My wife and I decided we were never going to get rich and we just wanted a nicer, calmer, safer lifestyle so that's when we started looking around for other options. We had very close friends who had got permanent residency here and were emigrating and they convinced us that this was a country we should look at. So I closed down a very large business I had been running in South Africa and flew over here with my friends in September 2003.

It wasn't a typical come and look see, then go back and think about it situation. I came to find a way to gain permanent residency. My wife and daughter remained in South Africa - my daughter to finish her school term and my wife to sell our house and various other things. I moved here and immediately started looking for work.

Like the other migrants that I knew, I started accessing the various job websites and reading every major newspaper in the country. Then I started networking. I started by picking out the major firms in my area of expertise, called them, made appointments, and asked for advice about employment possibilities. I got the sense that there were an awful lot of jobs here but that there were some very peculiar things about this job market and this culture that didn't assure me that I would find a job. But I was determined to do so. I had essentially burned my bridges behind me so I had to make it work here. To that end we were willing to spend a serious amount of money to gain access to this country and this society.

It has been terribly expensive coming to this country. To begin with I hired an immigration consultancy firm to advise us on how to proceed to gain permanent residency and to deal with the Immigration Department. I found it absolutely impossible to deal with the Department on a personal basis. One, they were convoluted, two they were incompetent, three they were hostile. They didn't want to deal with me as an individual despite all their protestations to the contrary and all the flowery phrases on their website and other places. I also found that because the rules changed so frequently the Department's employees were often the worst source of information. The immigration consultants and even other migrants knew more about the process than the employees.

Looking back on it, being a highly skilled migrant, it was absolutely essential to hire an immigration consultant. If I had been a fitter and turner or a mechanic or in a blue collar labour position I wouldn't have needed to hire a consultant but my work is specialised and the profession I work in is virtually unknown in this country. Also because of my age, the number of points I had at the time in relation to the number of points I required, were lower but still within the acceptable level. These factors made it essential to have specialised assistance.

I also found that the pedantic nature of how immigration officials work made it essential to have an agent working on my behalf. My job was to find work - that was my full-time job. I didn't have 24 hours a day to further my application process which the

immigration consultants were able to do. Otherwise I would have had to give up looking for work and spend all my time on trying to gain entry.

When I arrived in New Zealand I moved to a South African-owned hostel in Auckland. There was a support group of South Africans there and since we had just spent seven years in that country and knew the culture quite well, that was a good entrée into the country. Most of what I learned about how to look for work was learned through the experiences of other immigrants living at the guest house. They passed on their networks and their contacts and their advice about how they had gone about job searching. I very quickly followed their example.

I have learned that Kiwis are very open, genuinely nice people and they are interested in outsiders - to a certain point. What amazed me was - and this is absolutely unique in my experience - this is a country where you can pick up the telephone and call the CEO of the largest companies in the country and not only does the person take your call but they are quite honestly interested in who you are and will give you 10-15 minutes to chat about your situation, particularly if you frame it in the right way – say you are looking for advice not asking for a job. People are very happy to give advice and to help out others who may not understand how the system works. And they are happy to pass you on to other contacts. And so that's what I did for the first 3-4 months until I learned how the system worked.

There were other very basic things that I had to learn, for example, the politically correct nature of the culture. People here are much more concerned about *process* than *outcomes*. So I learned you had to take out anything in your CV that deals with performance. In my experience, everywhere else in the world you are judged on your performance - you are not judged on whether you are a nice person or whether you belong to some club or went to such and such a varsity or your favourite sport. What they care about in the rest of the world is delivery, outcomes. They don't care about process - unless you are so antagonistic that people don't want to deal with you.

By “process” I mean concern about being a team player, consensus, being able to speak by asking questions rather than making statements. This is a very, very strong Kiwi

characteristic. The very tentative nature of how people speak in this country, the concern that people will feel you are too strong, too aggressive, too ambitious. These are things that are viewed negatively, I believe. It took me a few months to learn that this was the case.

It took me maybe 15 iterations of my CV to get something that was so dumbed-down that I could actually get an interview. When I took out the performance stuff and included information about my hobbies and my family (which is really no-body else's business but Kiwis are terribly concerned about that) then I started getting interviews.

I was good at the interviews but to get short-listed and then get the job, required a whole new set of skills. I had to learn how to make social chit-chat and how to give people confidence that I was like them. That is what came through strongly in the interviews – they were concerned about who I was as a person and would I fit in. It wasn't: "This person has generic experience that is highly relevant to our situation and we are willing to view them as an expert because, my God, they have achieved at a much higher level than they will ever be expected to achieve in this country". No, that was not the case. What was very, very common to all of these interviews was at least 20 minutes of conversation.

It sort of reminded me of what I had encountered in other parts of the world where this is a very normal type behaviour because people want to deal with you as another human being before talking about work. Work is sort of ancillary to the purpose of being together – enjoying each other's company. Which is fine, that's sort of the way I am as well. But I found it different to what I was used to.

I was happy and pleased to be offered this job because it has enabled me to acquire permanent residency in this country and I am very appreciative that the Council was prepared to take a gamble on me as a foreigner. At the same time I am frustrated working in local government, particularly within this Council, because of the lack of resources. I am being radically underpaid compared to what I am worth – even within the NZ context. I take it as a granted that working in New Zealand means that I take a major cut in pay but the fact is, I am currently earning about 25% of what I was earning

in my previous employment. That is okay, we weren't driven by money to come to this country but I do think that the salary level is unrealistic. Also, there is no acknowledgement that this is an important function. It's not that I need tremendous recognition, that I have a huge ego that needs to be stroked, but I do feel it is lamentable that the importance of economic development within this Council is just not understood or appreciated. Yet frankly, I think it is an activity that affects all the various departments of the Council and probably is among the most important activities in this city. It is going to determine the future of this city - the employment patterns, the quality of life, the rateable base. But there are no resources to be able to pursue this.

My wife is an early childhood teacher. She applied for eight jobs when she first arrived and within days she received two job interviews. She went to one and within five minutes was offered a job – that was it, the end of her job search. She is very appreciative of having been offered the job but she has found that early childhood education in this country is in its infancy. The level of understanding about what children need and how to stimulate them and how to not just be a baby-sitting service is not very well understood. Despite the recognition that there is a tremendous need here, it's a profession that has a long way to go before it becomes a really professional service. Again, they are process orientated - they are not outcomes driven.

My experience is that Kiwis are inward focused, they are insular and that is understandable when you consider the location and the geography of the country and the fact that the country has only started to accept large numbers of immigrants recently - foreigners are still a relatively new phenomena. The country itself is still in many ways a mono-cultural society - a unique Pacific culture - something that is an amalgam between Maori and Pacific Island cultures and the mainstream Pakeha culture. And that is fine -there is absolutely nothing wrong with that - but people are very inwardly focused. They are not particularly interested in what is going on in the rest of the world except to the extent that it gratifies some immediate need that they have such as economic gain - and food - they like to try different food types!

We have a lot of acquaintances in New Zealand – in our community and at work, but we don't have a lot of close friends. The close friends that we have developed are other

foreigners like ourselves or are Kiwis married to foreigners. We don't have a lot in common with the base culture here. My own culture is quite different, my wife's culture is very, very different and our international experiences are very much different from the great bulk of people here.

Our daughter is 16 and she goes to college and has settled in. She has many, many more friends than we do. Because she is young and like a sponge she has picked up the accent immediately – the jargon. I literally don't understand a lot of what she says and the terms she uses. She likes school - it's not very challenging, which I guess is one of the reasons why she likes it.

New Zealanders have a unique language. The level of understanding of English grammar, punctuation, the ability to speak English is very limited in this country. People here have taken to the valley girl syndrome (you know like, like, like I can talk forever but I can't say a single thing). New Zealanders are very good at that – I mean *really* good at it. It's disconcerting for someone of my age who has been raised to be able to express themselves and where verbal communication was important. I have to tell you that professionally, I am appalled at the standard of the writing at all levels. It just shows me that people are uneducated.

One of the stratagems that I used to be able to finally get interviews was to start using Kiwi-isms to create a common bond with people. Another stratagem I used to fit-in was to dress down. I don't dress as formally as I used to but I still find I am over-dressed in most situations. I'm also not nearly as focused on outcomes, although internally I am. I still have my own high standards for my own performance but I don't push them as much with other people as I did previously because I find that people almost inevitably dislike that. I am becoming more process oriented and try to fit in even though I find it mostly a waste of time. It is essentially a way of patting people on the back and saying "I'm okay you're okay" Well, okay, that's part of the game, so I play the game. I play by those rules.

This is something that I didn't mention earlier but maybe I should mention it. I believe there is a very deeply ingrained racist streak through this society and it is very

unpleasant – very targeted towards different ethnic groups and different racial groups. In other countries this sort of attitude would be sanctioned but here is it pretty mainstream. The fact that people in high profile positions are allowed to get away with racist comments is a very poor reflection on this society. It shows a deep-seated inability to live up to Kiwi values. We talk here about how we have to be so supportive and tolerant of each other and we have these mechanisms to defuse and deal with conflict but the comments you hear about other races shows me that maybe this is a superficial belief and, in fact, these qualities have not been inculcated in the culture. We just pay lip service to them.

I learned about the Treaty of Waitangi when I went to the Department of Immigration website but I didn't know how important it was and I didn't know that I would be quizzed on it at every single job interview I went for. I didn't realise how sensitive people were about it and I didn't realise that I had to play to a Maori audience in all of these different organisations. In many of the government jobs you absolutely had to perform for the Maoris - if they didn't pass muster on you, believe me, you won't get the job.

For me that wasn't a problem. I have lived with indigenous peoples around the world for years and my wife and children are indigenous, so I talked a little bit about that in the interviews. I had to quickly educate myself on the historical background and I find it to be one of the attractive things about living here – that there *is* such a strong native influence. I think it makes life more interesting. I think it's what makes the place we live in really great – there are so many Maori and Pacific Islanders here - they are really nice people - interesting people.

I came here and my family came here because we saw this as a secure place to live and we have found that to be the case. We like the lifestyle, we like the people, we like the culture. We like the fact that it is small and there is room and space and time to be a human being here. And we like the fact that it is a young country that is inventing itself - it doesn't have all that many things wrong with it. Sure it's got all the modern ills that other societies have but they are relatively minor. They are manageable and they are human-scale. I like the country very much. I am looking forward to becoming a citizen.

And I think Kiwis are very genuine, intrinsically nice people. I find that Kiwis are very unpretentious and that is something I like very much - I think it is an admirable quality. Nobody cares about how much money you have or what kind of car you drive or whether you have a flash house or what you are dressed like. People really are concerned about you as a person - not looking at the outward trappings that other societies seem to think is so important. In many ways it reminds me of what it was like growing up in the United States in the 1950s. New Zealand seems to me about 50 years behind the rest of the industrialised world and I think that is very positive. I'm all for that.

But for all that, if you come here as an immigrant and you want to settle here, you have to desperately want to do so because the difficulties in gaining entrance to this country are immense. More so than any other country I have been in and I have lived in dozens of countries. Here, the entry hurdle is so high, so difficult, so sustained and so expensive. People lament the fact that the number of immigrants is dropping but I think it is due to the difficulty of getting in here. And frankly, once you get in you have to really want something that this country has. You can't come here because you want to make money. You can't come here because you want to further your profession - it is too small a place for that. Unless you came in at a time when you can make money from the appreciation of property values you are not going to be able to save money here - no way. What you *are* going to do is have a nice life-style, enjoy a beautiful countryside, be able to take advantage of great recreational opportunities. But you have to be seriously committed to being here to actually last through the process.

An Engineer from England

My name is Aaron and I am 37 years old. I came from London with an Honours Degree in Mechanical Engineering and fourteen years experience in my field. I wanted a change and a better life. I wanted clean air, better views, a less hectic life, to be able to get to places without encountering traffic jams all the time. I was sick of the hassles with my job but in the UK it is very difficult to move out of the field you are in. I came to New Zealand for a holiday and I saw that it had everything that I wanted but once I had made the decision to come to New Zealand, it took me about 3 years to get through all the hoops.

The reason it took me so long to get here was basically the efforts I had to go through to meet the points system. The pass mark for points kept moving from, I think 19, up to 25 and then 28. That was incredibly infuriating because when I thought I had got there, I found I hadn't. It became clear that the seriously critical factor was getting a job offer - that was the threshold that enabled you to have the necessary points.

But at that time there was nobody that I could find prepared to offer employment until I was physically in New Zealand. I had several telephone interviews and when I came over here on vocation to visit my cousin I had a couple of interviews off the street, but nobody was prepared to offer me a job until I was living here. I was applying for jobs directly related to my qualifications and experience – project management, design of buildings, maintenance of buildings – so the reason wasn't that I didn't have the right qualifications and experience.

And then they changed the rules – the Immigration Department introduced something called the Job Search Visa. This enabled you to apply for a visa permit as long as you were within 5 points of the pass mark and you were not claiming points for a job. It was a 6-month visa, so that was how long you had to find a job. After that you had to leave the country and it was unlikely that you would ever be able to get one of those again in your life. The visa enabled you to relocate and do any kind of job – so if you were a doctor and you got a job as a taxi driver you would qualify for a point less than if

you got a job as a doctor. So for someone who was only 1 or 2 points below the pass mark all the time, that job search visa was a really good incentive. I applied for it.

Then on the 7 July 2003 the rules changed – again. The Immigration Minister announced a new arrangement called “Work to Residency Visa”. I thought that was what the job search visa was all about! But the new Minister said, “The first thing we are going to do is get rid of the job search visa so if you have not been given a communication saying you will be issued with a job search visa then you will *not* be issued with one.” She said that everyone who had submitted an application would be assessed under the new conditions and since there was a backlog of about 22,000 – 24,000 applicants (and I was just one of them) it would take them 3 months to get through the list.

Under the new criteria, if you didn’t already have a job then you would be automatically rejected. So I knew I was going to fail. But they told us that all the details like your health certificates and your police certificates would be valid for 3 months past the date that they rejected your application so you could resubmit within 3 months. So I thought, I’ve got 3 months until they reject me and then another 3 months until I can resubmit. So I have 6 months to get myself a job so I qualify. This was effectively the same as the job search visa in my view, bearing in mind that I had a residency visa application registered with the immigration service. So I threw in my job, I used all my leave and I left two weeks later on a plane travelling here on a tourist visa.

Just before I left, my cousin in New Zealand noticed an advertisement for a job with the New Zealand branch of the same company I was employed with in London – a similar position to the one I was in. So I immediately applied for that from London and lo and behold, there was a message waiting on my arrival here saying “*Get in touch with us, don’t worry about jetlag, we want to see you immediately*”. And so I had a bit of banter with them for about 3 or 4 weeks and they kept saying they would employ me but they wouldn’t put anything down on paper. I decided that I couldn’t afford to put all my eggs in one basket. I only had a certain amount of time and so I started applying left, right and centre for jobs. All but one employer interviewed me and eventually I ended up with 3 job-offers. I took *this* job because the organisation offered a priority on the

residency. Because all my details were already in the system, there was no problem; I was issued with a two year residency permit. It had taken me seven weeks from arriving in the country to securing a job.

I was surprised that I was offered this job because it was for a civil engineer with project management experience. I had the project management but nothing on civil engineering. But from what I have heard, my CV was miles above others that had applied and my interview technique was significantly superior to the others and for them it was a pretty easy decision.

This organisation is a great employer and the job has been a great introduction to New Zealand – particularly Treaty of Waitangi issues and iwi matters because we have to deal with iwi on land acquisitions. When we are planning construction projects (which is my primary role) we are dealing with iwi from a very tentative stage. You start with “*We’re thinking of putting a road over here, how do you feel about that?*” And that can be 20 years before we build it! So that has been a very, very nice, easy, smooth relationship-building with a culture that I have had no experience with before now.

I knew the Treaty existed before I migrated because I had been here for a holiday and I had been to Te Papa. So I knew it was about land and I knew it was a bone of contention but to be honest, back then I would have seen the English and the Crown as being unjustly treated by the local iwi. The Immigration Service provides a pack which details the Treaty but not in a form that you can understand. Whereas my employing organisation does. They send us all on a bi-cultural experience with a couple of days down at a marae. We sleepover at the marae. You get thoroughly educated in the Treaty.

My experience at the Marae was within 6 months of my arriving in New Zealand so I was very new. There were about 15 of us, most were native Kiwis and the shortest amount of time any of them had been employed in the organisation was two and a half years. I think the most worrying thing for me from that experience was that, even though I was really new to the country, I was certainly no more ignorant than anyone

else in the room. I found that worrying. The Kiwis had been through the New Zealand school system and all I had done was read about it at Te Papa.

Mostly I socialise with people from work or consultants or contractors – it seems kind of natural really. I have a cousin here and I socialise with her a lot. She's a single mum with a four year old. I baby-sit for her so she can go out. She's a pom as well – we are the only two family members on this side of the equator.

I also have an interest in cricket – it has always been a big part of my life. When I came here I didn't know any teams, any clubs, any standards. There were big advertisements at the Basin and there was an item on the Paul Holmes show with Billy Bowden saying they needed umpires. This was just after my arrival here – end of July, August – right at the beginning of the cricket season. My cricket kit was coming here on a boat so I decided a good way to get to know the standard and the teams and the grounds would be to volunteer to be an umpire. I told the Chief Umpire (Evan Watkin), that I would umpire till Christmas and then I will pick a team and go and play for them. I walked out on the field and I loved it - umpiring that is - and so I decided not to play. That was it.

But that hasn't really given me social contacts because, although you are part of a team, there are two umpires and a scorer, but you don't have that same team spirit as you would if you were just one of the players. So the socialising is a lot less. And you don't umpire with the same person every week. There are about 40 umpires in Wellington and it is very rare to umpire with the same person more than twice in a season. So the build-up of relationships there is going to be very slow. I don't have a problem with that, most of the people are twice my age because most umpires have given up playing in their mid-forties, not in their mid-thirties like I have done.

I have been here two years now. I think Wellington is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. The people here are far more relaxed. There is a far better attitude to life – there is a better balance between work and play.

There's a lot of development going on here so there's a lot of opportunity and I say that in several senses. In the UK I could never do the job I'm doing because even though I

am qualified to do it I would be applying with a minimum of 200-300 other people and as I said, I don't have the civil engineering background so I would automatically be kicked out in favour of someone who did. Here there is more work than there are people. My cousin has had the same experience. She is trained in business management and corporate sales and she is now doing a job that she wouldn't be doing in the UK. She has moved up the chain and has performed exceedingly well in her job. Again, you can do things here, you can go places here that you couldn't do in the UK because it's still dominated by the old school tie.

The other big thing is, it doesn't matter what standard I was in the UK, the base level in the UK is higher, so if I was bad in the UK I would still be good here. That presents problems when you're working obviously, because people generally don't achieve standards that I think are normal. So working with New Zealanders can be frustrating because the base-level of ability and performance is a lot lower. I think that is across the board. I think it's because there is a much lower level of expectation, it's about the level that was required in the UK in the 1980's. That's all it is. It's not that people *can't* do – it's the level of expectation that is the problem. The good thing is the attitude – you can improve people's behaviour and performance because they have a good attitude.

I have noticed a few cultural differences here. For one thing, I have had to dress down, that took a lot to get used to. I'm used to the City of London – you know, there you have to have a silk hanky in your jacket pocket and you have to have a tie with a clasp. There's a lot more status attached to your clothing whereas here there is no status on clothing at all.

There is also a big difference in social interaction. There's a lot more physical activity here – a lot more people are fitness orientated. The drinking culture is also a lot different. It's changing - since I came over here in 1998 on vocation, the party culture in Courtenay Place has increased but people still drink primarily in their homes. Whereas in the UK we go to the pub as you can see in the soaps on TV - everything is based around the corner pub. Everyone goes down to their local every Friday and Saturday night. I used to go there during the week as well. I'm quite happy about that

difference because that's one of the things I needed to get away from – I've spent too much time in local pubs!

I don't really miss the opportunity to travel more easily to other countries because for the last 10 years or so I have been travelling a lot outside of the UK. I have been to many countries in Europe and outside (about twenty-five altogether) so I am well travelled. I'm enjoying exploring New Zealand.

In the last nine months things have changed since when I was trying to get over here in 2002 and 2003. It is obvious that the skills shortage is so great that Kiwi companies have had to change – they are having to offer jobs abroad. You can find out about those jobs on offer at the Job Fairs being run in London and companies that are international and via the internet. So people now don't have to actually be *in* New Zealand to be offered a job. There was no-way that a Kiwi company would do that for me. I had to pay for everything to get here, now people get paid to come. That's obviously a better scenario for potential immigrants.

An Engineer from Romania

My name is Eva. I am 36 years old. I came from Romania with my husband who is an electrical engineer, and our six year old daughter in December 2001. In Romania, I was working as a mechanical engineer. There weren't many incentives there for young people. We couldn't afford to buy a house so we were living with my grandfather. Having your own house is almost impossible because the wages are not good. The only way to get a good salary is to work for a foreign company but that was not likely in my town because the mayor didn't encourage foreign companies to invest in the city. That is just stupid. There are no activities, no events. People are very sad and because they are sad they are grumpy. I think I was becoming very sad too.

In 1999, we saw an advertisement from a consultancy company in Romania saying they could assist with immigration to New Zealand so I decided to send my CV to the company. They asked me to go for an interview and so I did but I didn't really trust them so I got onto the Immigration New Zealand website and made my own application. I didn't really know very much about New Zealand at the time and there wasn't very much information about NZ on the website at that time (they have improved a lot since then I can tell you that!) But I read the immigration policy and it seemed like we could get accepted and really, we just wanted to get out - go anywhere. I had a friend who didn't live very far from me and she wanted to go too so we put our applications in together.

I had to pass the English exam (IELTS) before I was able to apply for residency. I couldn't afford to pay for an English teacher so I had to learn it on my own. But I like English and so I managed to do it. My friend passed her English exam in May 2000 and she applied for her residency in June. I passed mine in September so we weren't able to apply until then. The exam was very hard. They have increased the standard even higher since then. I don't think I could have passed it under the new standards. My husband found it too hard, he couldn't pass it so I applied as the principle applicant and my husband was the secondary applicant. We didn't really have enough points but we were within 3 points of the minimum and with that number we were able to get a work

visa which gave us entry to the country and six months to find a job – it didn't matter what the job was. After that we would be able to get a proper residency.

As soon as I passed my exam I wrote to the Registration Board in New Zealand thinking that I had to register my qualifications with them but in fact that was wrong information on the Immigration website or at least it wasn't that clear. Anyway, I wrote to the Registration Board and a guy answered me and said that was not the right place to register but he gave me all the information about where to register my qualifications and he gave me the IPENZ website address. I wrote back and thanked him. My friend and I kept searching the website, looking for more information about New Zealand. My friend suggested that I write back to the man I had made contact with and ask him about job opportunities. And so I did and he wrote back giving me all the information about jobs and life in New Zealand. He has been our friend and guide ever since!

Over the next few months we kept communicating with him. He lived in Wellington and so, although we had originally intended to go to Christchurch (because that was the place the consultancy company had told us about) we decided to go to Wellington - because of this friend we had made. My friend and her husband arrived in New Zealand five months before we did. They were met by our friend and his wife, they stayed with them for a while and he helped them to settle into the country. He even called me in Romania after my friends arrived in NZ to let me know they were safe. When we arrived in September 2001, we were able to stay with our Romanian friends because they already had a house.

After we arrived here we started very seriously to look for work. It was very stressful because we only had 6 months to find something. I couldn't find anything in my field. I got offered an engineering job with a private company in Hamilton but because of my lack of experience I didn't have the courage to take it. I told the guy I couldn't do it on my own, I would need someone to guide me.

I was looking for jobs in the papers, on websites. I read a lot about the engineering companies and knew I wanted to work for this organisation where I now work, right from the beginning. I sent them my CV but I didn't get any positive response. We

didn't go on the unemployment benefit – we just lived on our savings which weren't very much. After one month, I decided I should start looking for other sorts of work and so I applied for a position in a bakery and I got the job – working on the counter. My husband came to the interview and he got a job too – as a baker! He was very good. He always really applies himself to his work and so he soon picked up the skill.

I started selling bread and I got a permanent work contract which is what I needed for residency and my husband got a work permit even though he still couldn't speak English. I worked at the bakery for nine months. Our residency was approved in principle in November 2001 but we had to wait until my husband had sat the English exam. He didn't manage to obtain the level required in the IELTS test so we paid an English language bond (\$3,300) and after that were able to obtain residency.

I enrolled for a masters in Operations Research at Victoria University but within one week of enrolling I got a job as a production engineer in a factory in Porirua. So I had to withdraw from the course - it was too much with work and my daughter to look after.

I was very excited about the job at the beginning – I didn't know anything about what was going on there but I soon learned about their systems and I think I made a good contribution. But they didn't increase my wages for two years so I decided there was nothing for me there and I started looking for a new job. I wrote to the Kiwi Ora course at Correspondence School and got a book from them about how to look for a job. I started looking very seriously for another job in February last year and in November I got this one and I started on the first of December.

I'm not working as an engineer I'm just doing administration working with the project managers but I am looking at enrolling for the civil engineering graduate programme. I'm a mechanical engineer not a civil engineer and I need to learn some new things so I can be more useful. My qualifications are recognised in New Zealand but I want to register with IPENZ so I need to do the civil engineering programme.

I'm really lucky – this is just such a great environment. I've never ever been in such a great work environment before – everyone is helpful and nice and smart and – well I'm

in love with all of them! Working here makes me feel great – it makes me feel encouraged to learn and improve myself. And this is what I need. If I couldn't find something satisfying I would want to move to another job but I just want to stay here. My husband got a job as a power systems operator at the same time as I got this one. He is specialising in alternative power systems, working for a power supply company. He enjoys his job too. We moved to Tawa when I got my job at the factory and last December we bought a house there. That was at the same time we both started our new jobs so it was all happening at once – it was sort of overwhelming!

I think the new immigrants have an opportunity that we didn't when we arrived here (because of all the courses and support systems that are available now). We were lucky that we had our kiwi friend who helped us but otherwise we would have been sort of lost because everything was new for us - everything, including driving on the other side! I did not drive in Romania but I do now.

Language is the hardest part. I was quite lucky because before I came I had a chance to write to our friend and I learned a lot from his letters but our English is still not that good. My husband still makes mistakes - *I* still make mistakes - but he didn't have the luck to be in a working environment where people talk to you so it has been harder for him. I find that New Zealanders are very patient with foreigners and very helpful. You just have to ask and they will correct you, so you improve all the time.

You hear about many bad things happening here but I think if you compare the proportion of bad people here with the proportion of good people, there is only a very small proportion of bad. Comparing that to Romania - well, let me say I think it is much better here!

We have made friends here – one is a very good friend – he works for the ESOL programme and he was teaching my husband English. We see him quite often and we have met other people through him and we socialise with them too. I am on the fundraising committee at my daughter's school. I was very involved for more than a year, helping at every event. But I don't really have time to help them too much now. We made some friends in the suburb where we first lived and we still see them occasionally.

My daughter is getting on very well. She just loves her new school in Tawa. Our daughter is a real kiwi, you wouldn't say she is not a kiwi – she even has a kiwi accent. I have been trying to pick that up but I haven't managed to pick that up yet! She has made friends at school. She works very hard at her lessons. She has also been learning ballet for three years now.

I have learned to write quite good CVs. I have helped a few people, including my husband, when he got his current job. I helped him prepare for the interview and it all came from the book that I got from Kiwi Ora. It's a very easy course but it is very useful. You get excellent resources.

I also did a Life Works course – that really helped too. It gave me more confidence and I think I became more assertive. It's a really nice course - they give you a coach and the coach comes to your place every month or so. They gave me more confidence. I still need some more but I'm better! Now I am doing another free course in public administration at Weltec.

When I first came here I noticed that people were very relaxed – we were very stressed and we are still trying to get rid of that. We found the food very different so I have changed my cooking style. I think Kiwi meals are much easier to make and more healthy than Romanian food. I still cook Romanian food for our Kiwi friends but not so much for our Romanian friends – they prefer Kiwi food!

I think you guys have quite a different way of thinking and approaching things and we are still trying to work that out. But I think we have a very similar sense of humour – we just have to learn enough English so we can make jokes ourselves!!

I found out about the Treaty of Waitangi when I was doing the courses at polytech. I think it is a very sensitive topic. I think the government is trying to repair what was done wrong in the past but I think English people brought here many good things and there wouldn't have been so much progress and such a good life if it hadn't have been for them. I do think Maori rights need to be recognised but I think they are with things like the Waitangi Tribunal which I think is the only court like that in the world. I think

we all should live together and try to build the future of New Zealand together because New Zealand is all our country. It's not because I'm an immigrant, but I think that every single person that brings something to New Zealand culture benefits this country as a whole. In my country we have Hungarians, Germans, Turkish - we all live together. There have been some little issues but nothing major and we have just learned to live together. Just look at those places where people of different cultures couldn't get along – they have destroyed their countries. So I think Maori have to look around, open their eyes, get educated and try to integrate. It must be hard for them but they have to accept the reality – if you don't get educated, you won't get anywhere. And you can't live on your own that is for sure and I bet we would all have a better life if we would all just work together.

I think I can be more of myself here, I have become more relaxed. In Rumania, you just have to be good, starting at school. Things are changing now but it was very hard, very straight. I think it killed a little bit of our personalities. You had to comply with everything really - you weren't allowed to have your opinion. Bureaucracy – well! I can tell you there is no bureaucracy in New Zealand. People don't believe me but I tell them they should just go to Romania and see what it is like. We really wanted a better life for our daughter that was definitely the main driving force for us to leave. When you live there you just get used to it, you just think there is no future. I look at my parents and my husband's parents and well, they don't enjoy life they don't know *how* to do it. I don't think people wake up until they get out of the country.

Getting out now is just a matter of money but before it was impossible. Now, young people, well, they just go. When the communists were in control, there was only a few hours of TV each day and it was only *their* news - you couldn't see any foreign broadcast. Coming right is going to be a very slow process because those communists, well, they have just destroyed our country, destroyed our people, destroyed people's morale. But their spirit is not dead and I think, slowly, slowly it will come right. It's just a matter of time. I don't want to go back – not to stay - but I will go back sometime to see my parents. Hopefully our families will be able to come out to visit us some day but we will need to pay for them to come, they couldn't afford it. So we need to get better paying jobs first.

But I do miss having family here. I would really like to bring my sister and her family to New Zealand but neither of them have any tertiary qualifications so they can't qualify under the points system. I was hoping we could sponsor them to come but I have just found out that I can't because the family quota system only applied to refugees. It's so unfair – we have been paying taxes for four years now and we've never asked for any assistance from the government. We would support them when they got here and help them find jobs. So it doesn't seem to much to ask. I think each case should be assessed on its merits.

This is a great country. You can get what you want if you really work for it. You just have to read, look around, ask around, apply for jobs. Its just a matter of time and wanting to integrate into this society. Our life here is great – we don't get bored, we are very busy, I'm learning lots. You get many opportunities in New Zealand – people just have to look. I think people should take every opportunity to learn and improve themselves. Even though it wasn't easy at all, we have achieved here in four years more than we could have achieved in fifteen years in Romania. I just can't get over it!

A Geologist from the USA

My name is Robert and I am 40 years old. I came to New Zealand directly from Seattle, where I grew up most of my life. I have a Bachelor of Geology and a Masters in Geology and Environmental science from Oklahoma State University. I came to New Zealand about a year after graduation.

While I was at the university I lectured for a year and did research in the School of Geology. That school in particular was very heavily into, and sponsored by, oil and gas industries. It was big on hydrogeology, groundwater issues. Graduates mainly found work with large corporate oil and gas firms, environmental groups or geotechnical groups. The University had a good reputation in the industry for recruits.

Coming to New Zealand was the choice of my wife at the time. She was a New Zealander I met at university. She had the desire to return home and I had the desire to try something a bit different. I thought New Zealand sounded like a very nice place and it would be kind of a new adventure. I came over on an open work visa, through (my former wife) After I was here for two years I applied for permanent residency and the year after that, after I had been here for three years I applied for citizenship and got that in 2000 I think. So I am a New Zealander! You can see my passport! I no longer use my US passport. I've actually cut it so I can't use it – it's dangerous to travel on, these days!

Before I left the States I did some internet searches to see what was available in the job line, sending details to some of the recruiting agencies and really just doing anything to get some information. (My former wife's) parents were sending us old newspapers for about six months before we came. I knew there wasn't a lot of oil and gas industry in New Zealand but I was pretty open to what was on offer. There was a bit of oil and gas exploration here, and there were lots of environmental groups, consulting groups, and things like that. There didn't seem to be a shortage of what looked like potential opportunities. But after I arrived, I found out that it was quite a difficult market to tap into, it was quite an uphill struggle.

We came first to Nelson where my former wife's parents were and used that as a base for our operations. We got here around the summer holidays. We knew there wasn't much we could do during the holiday period, so we stayed there for a while and got some money together. While we were in Nelson, we went to the library and searched all the various newspapers, again looked up quite a few of the companies, things like that. But nothing came up.

(My former wife) had some relations in Auckland, so without any luck in the short term in Nelson, we decided to head to Auckland. We figured that, being the biggest city it would have the most opportunities, so it would be the best place to start. We stayed with the relations for awhile, but then it came to the point where we really had to strike out on our own.

We had enough money to start renting a flat in Auckland so we did this and continued the job search. Both of us. (My wife) initially got some relief teaching work in a couple of Auckland schools, which was enough to get a bit of money coming in to pay the bills. I continued to answer job ads, and do cold-calls to companies and send letters. Eventually I filled up an A4 box with rejection letters. I didn't get asked to go to one interview. Most of them said that unfortunately they didn't have anything that fitted my skills at this time, or that they didn't feel that my skills fitted their need. But, even though my background's geology, oil and gas, it's closely related to engineering, and even the geotechnical firms wouldn't take a look at me. I wasn't quite a graduate, but I didn't quite have enough experience to do some things. Also they didn't seem to consider the ability to work outside a particular skill set. It seemed to me that they were just not even interested in talking. Most of the ads I see today are still very specific as to what they're looking for. It seems unlikely that they are going to find someone that fits such specific requirements within the limited labour pool in this country.

Nothing was really working, so in the end I answered an ad for a forecourt attendant at a local petrol station. I worked in that job for about two or three months while I continued to look for other work. Then I got a step up and started selling computers in a retail outlet! It wasn't a nationwide brand or any thing, just a small company that sold PCs in a shop. About two weeks after I started it went into bankruptcy. I had to start to look

again. I got into another company that was just starting up, providing computer services to 'Mom and Pop' type shops. My job involved going into these small businesses trying to drum up customers for computer services, help-desk kind of things.

At one point I had sent a cold letter to Fletcher Challenge Energy in New Plymouth and actually got a response. That was really my first positive response after about six months in Auckland. They had a technical assistant leaving and they offered the opportunity to start at the base level. Even though it was pretty much below my skill level, it was a foot in the door. I don't think I was in that job for more than two or three months when they promoted me to a geologist. Two and a half years later, when I was made redundant because the company was downsizing, I left as a senior geologist.

I can't remember where I read it but I saw somewhere that the companies that are open to people coming in with international backgrounds seem to be industries that have a diversity of nationalities within the company already. In Fletcher Challenge there were several Canadians, Swedish, a Dutch guy, several New Zealanders, and a few Australians. It was a very diverse workforce.

So I was out of a job again. I went back to the papers and the internet. I answered a job ad for a market coordinator – basically it involved trading, buying and selling electricity at a wholesale level. This was for a new company that was starting up out of the ECNZ split. I got a video interview from New Plymouth. That went well and then I was flown to Christchurch and interviewed again. I was subsequently offered the job after a trip to Twizel where the job was located, to see if I was happy to go to a remote location like that. I was happy to go there for personal reasons - at the same time I was being made redundant, my wife and I split. Kind of everything was going. I was happy to leave.

I was based in Twizel for about eight or nine months, and then they relocated our group to Wellington. I was in that same job for about three more months and then got promoted up to a mid-level manager. That job was more in my field - looking after climate issues, water-related issues, in regards to the production of the hydro-electric generation assets. Also, I was responsible for managing the IT side of the systems and information, related to our small group. I did that for about three years.

Last year we started a restructuring of the organisation and my job has changed - kind of a sideways move but I've got more accountability and responsibility and two more staff members under me. But I'm looking to move on and do something else so I've been back in the job market, looking at opportunities inside and outside of my field that are related to the skills that I have. I've had a few interviews but never really had any success. One was with a government department that was looking to getting into water resources/allocation policy issues. I have undertaken a course at an Australian University in irrigation design and management, because this company was facing growing issues with water rights so I was asked to up skill in that side of it. So I got involved with a lot of work to do with water policy in New Zealand and what was going on in Australia as well. I got an interview for that job but wasn't successful.

When I first arrived in New Zealand it felt like a really good fit here. Coming from the States, it was a much more relaxed atmosphere here. People were quite different and it felt a bit more (whether it actually was or not) it felt a bit safer. At first everything was new, and it was kind of a mission of discovery for quite some time. There are things that aren't available here but you get used to not having some things that you don't really need any way. But then after a while, especially when you visit other places, you start to remember what you had and what you're missing, and you start missing it again. You start taking a closer look at where you are and what you have, and the problems that New Zealand faces with just taking care of itself. To me it seems the country isn't helping itself. It's very frustrating. You get to a point where you think, "If they're not going to help themselves, then I'd rather not be a part of it any more."

When I say, "Not helping themselves" I mean, well for example, being in the electricity industry, the biggest thing for us is the infrastructure for electricity supply. It's been a situation of development not keeping pace with the needs of the nation, not just with population increase but actually getting some security here to attract investment to grow business. Most of the power is generated in the South Island; it relies on transmission to the North through a system that's deteriorating, a system that was built back in the sixties and has never been upgraded but there's always an excuse why it can't be upgraded. There seems to be something holding New Zealand and the Government

back regarding planning for the future. The Government seems to be quite reactive rather than proactive, as far as trying to meet the needs of the future now, rather than waiting till it's crisis point, and then putting in a quick fix. It's a very inefficient way to operate.

At first I was quite interested in the Maori issues. New Zealanders that I would talk to about it would always talk quite down about Maori issues and I would ask them, "*Why do you feel like that? Why don't you understand their point of view?*" But after all these years, getting to understand what's going on, I very clearly see why most New Zealanders have that kind of a view point. And again, this is something the Government has to get over, to move forward on. All of these things that I'm saying here are what's standing in the way of New Zealand becoming what it thinks it is, and what it thinks it wants to be. Without overcoming a lot of these things, it's always going to be talk and not a lot of action.

I have a few kiwi friends that I have met mostly through work. I've heard a lot of people say is quite difficult breaking into social groups in New Zealand but when I got here I had the fortune to have a partner with quite a lot of family scattered around the country so it was relatively easy to get in. But most of my friendships start from work, work colleagues.

I've found it pretty easy as an American to get into the New Zealand culture and be accepted but as I said, it was very comfortable for me when I got here. It was the kind of lifestyle that I'd been looking for, and the kind of society that I'd been looking for. But again, that may have been because it was new at the time and in the past I ignored a lot of things that I'm now just starting to take to heart and realise that there are these issues that I'm not that happy with.

We contemplated moving to Australia – again, more opportunities. I've actually had several long distance interviews on the phone for jobs over there. That country seems much more open - you at least get a shot without getting discarded straight away, for unknown reasons.

I've gotten to the point where I don't feel like there's anywhere for me to go here. I have the opportunity to go to the UK with my current partner and so we're leaving – there's more opportunities there. I was never one to want to jump from job to job every few years. I like stability in my life, the comfort in knowing I had a job for the long term. As long as I was beneficial for that company, and it was beneficial for me, that was my goal. But it's to the point now, where I can't grow in this position. I have to get out of it, and it seems necessary to leave the country to take the next step.

A Nurse from India

My name is Sunita and I am a nurse. I came from Southern India at the end of 2003, leaving my two children with my family in India. My husband is working in Oman.

After gaining my nursing qualifications in India I worked there for about 18 months and then went with my husband to work in the Middle-East. Then I decided to apply for work in New Zealand. My sister, who is also a nurse, had moved to New Zealand already in July 2002. She liked it over here so she said "you should come too."

To practice as a nurse in New Zealand, for people with nursing degrees from India, you have to get a competency assessment before you can get registered. So I came over here in November 2003 on a four week visitor's permit to sit the course. It costs quite a lot of money for that course – about \$3,800 actually. You get a receipt for your fees and you have to show that to the Immigration Department before you can get a visitor's permit.

The course was held in New Plymouth. After I sat the exam I got my visa extended for a couple of months and I went to stay with my sister in Wellington. It's quite easy to get an extension - you just have to show that you have enough money or whatever to support yourself.

I got my competency certificate and got my registration from the Nursing Council in December 2003. I was very lucky, I didn't have to go many places to look for a job. My sister was already employed at Wellington Hospital. She saw a notice for a vacancy in the staff newsletter and she told me about it. So I applied for it and they called me for an interview and got it. I had a job within one week from finishing my course and I started working in January!!

Once I had the job offer, I went to the Immigration Department and they gave me a work permit. After I had that, I tried for my residency through the points system. I had enough points because I had the competency certificate and a job. They gave me the pack and I sent it back to them and it didn't take any time at all. At first I applied for my

whole family but my eldest daughter is profoundly handicapped. She had an accident as a baby and as a result she has serious brain damage – she can't do anything. When I told them that they told me I would have to apply for a medical waiver to get my child residency. You have to get that for handicapped children to show that they won't be a health worry to the country. I decided not to apply for that because I wanted my residency straight away so that I could do my job and could take advantage of other professional opportunities, do short courses that were being offered. With a work permit I could only work for one employer. With a residency permit I would be able to apply for jobs in any hospital.

But now that I have my residency I can apply for residency for my family –my husband and two kids. It should be easier. In my case, it shouldn't be a problem to get the medical waiver because we will be looking after her. She's five years old and she isn't on any medication or anything. So I don't need any other help. My husband would also be able to get a job here and then we would be able to afford to pay for help with looking after her. So we won't need to be looking for any benefit to pay for that.

I didn't need any assistance really when I got here because I had my sister. After I completed my course I went to live with her until I found a job. When I came for the course I found the people running it were very cooperative and helpful and friendly. I didn't know very much about New Zealand before I came - only some things my sister had told me. When she came out, she had *no* idea about the country except we knew it was a good place to live. I didn't know anything about the Treaty of Waitangi or Maori people but when we did our competency course they teach you all about New Zealand – the history, the background, the Maori culture, how you should treat Maori people in the health system. In two weeks they teach you a lot about New Zealand.

I think the New Zealand Immigration Department in India is really good but I did have a problem when I first applied for a visitors permit in Dubai. I was working in Oman but there was no Immigration Centre there so I had to go to Dubai. When I applied for a New Zealand visitors permit to get my competency assessment done, they wrote and told me that they did not find that I had any intention to come back to my own country. I don't know why they said that. I was applying for a visitors permit to do the

competency course. If I passed the course, obviously I would be applying for residency and looking for a job here. We can't go illegally and if you can't get a job you have to go back but you need the visitors permit to come to New Zealand to sit the course. So I went back to India and applied for my visitors permit there and they gave it to me.

Going through the course I thought that there were not many differences between India and here – nursing practices are about the same. There was only the language, there were some problems with getting people to understand what we say. We can read, write and understand English very well, that is not a problem, but when we speak sometimes there can be problems with understanding. I have found that New Zealanders are very good. They are really helpful and quite welcoming. They don't mind repeating things when you don't understand what they are saying. When I first started nursing here I got a lot of help and support from my colleagues. They have a buddy system here when you first start working and so you have someone working alongside you showing you how to do the different procedures – it is very good.

I am so happy working here. While I said there was not much difference between the two nursing practices in fact there is a big difference between what nurses can do here and what they can do in India. Nurses have more rights here. We practice the same things but in India we need to consult a doctor to carry out our duties. But here we have many standing orders, practice rules about how to do things so nurses can just go and get on with their job. I think that nurses are more respected over here and so I enjoy working here. The job that I have uses all my skills and qualifications – I like it.

I have a good social life. I see a lot of my sister. I live in a hostel. It is not very nice so I go to her house most nights for dinner and I spend the weekends with her. There are quite a lot of people from South India here in Wellington. We have a prayer meeting every alternate Friday, people from any Christian community are welcome. After we do our prayers we have a shared meal and talk. Those people are very supportive – they help you if you need anything. It's more like a family. I am a Catholic and usually I go to church on Sunday to attend the mass.

I have also made lots of friends at work. I have good relationships with the New Zealand nurses and others like Taiwanese, Chinese. We have many different nationalities working here. Someone coming from India that is new, they contact the Indian nurses and then we are friends – just like that.

There are definitely culture differences between New Zealand and India. We are a bit more, how to say, rigid in our thinking. We have more formalities, practices, ceremonies around things like religion. We give more value to the spiritual life. Like, we would not be going around saying we don't believe in God. We don't say that. But that's quite common here. Also, I think we are more family orientated. Our family structures are stronger, like, we still give value to arranged marriages.

But I haven't had to change much to fit in. I've got my own thoughts and beliefs and that's it - I can't change that. But I don't think it is necessary for me to change a lot to be here. Here, nobody is forcing me to do anything, you can just do what you feel like doing.

I eat mainly Indian. You can get Indian food easily here. I can get all the spices - you know we can't cook anything without spices!! But when I go to dinner with my colleagues I try other food.

It was very hard to leave my children and my husband but I do speak to my husband every day and at least three times a week I speak to my kids. We have a very good supportive family back home and they are looking after my kids. I hope to apply for residency for my kids at the end of this year. I don't know how long it will take because this is something special. It maybe not that easy to get Immigration to accept my daughter coming here. I'm sure she won't be a cost to the health system but they don't know that so I have to find a way to prove it.

My husband is still working in the Middle East. He has a Masters in Chemistry and is working for a company as a paint technologist - testing paint, how it performs under different conditions. I don't know if he would have any trouble finding a job but he should come here and try. He was supposed to come with me when I was applying for

residency for the family but his younger brother was drowned at that time and so he and I went to India to be with the family instead. But I talk to him every day for half an hour or an hour. He has a card system which gives him cheap calls. We now have more time to talk to each other than when we were together!

As I said, my children are with my family back in India. I have a good supportive family back home so I don't worry about my kids. I am missing them but I know they are being looked after. I have been back twice to India since I came here but it is very expensive to do that. It is very hard to leave the children each time, it is very hard for me being here without them. But I believe that if you want to gain something you have to be prepared to give something up. In a few months, I will apply to get residency for my family. If the Immigration Department won't give us a medical waiver for my daughter then I will have to go back. I can't live without my kids forever.

An Economist from Fiji

My name is Pita. I am 49 years old and I come from Fiji. I have a Bachelors in Economics from the University of the South Pacific and a Masters in Public Policy from the Victoria University of Wellington.

I worked for the Reserve Bank of Fiji for 10 years from 1989 to March 1999. There was a restructure at the bank and I was told that my services were not required - I suppose another way of saying it, I was kicked out. I was unemployed for a couple of months and then I managed to secure a part time job with the government again, and then, well there is a spiritual side to my story.

I became a Christian in December '98 - the year before I was made redundant. You know I had thought that being a Christian I wouldn't lose my job. Yeah, that's what I thought. And so it came as a surprise when I missed out with my position. Earlier, I had applied for a scholarship to do some studies but when the final list of recipients of the awards came out, I was unsuccessful. So I was feeling quite depressed in 1999 before I was laid off.

When I lost my job, I was just hanging around home with nothing. That's when the thought of migrating to New Zealand came up. I had come to New Zealand in 1997 for two weeks for a holiday with my family. On my way back, there was this voice telling me that I would love to migrate. I just fell in love with the place - I just felt, yeah, this is the place to be. I've been to Australia - I spent one year in Sydney in 1993-94. I didn't enjoy my stay there, put it that way. Compared to Wellington ... you know, Wellington is so laid back.

And I think, part of the reason I decided to migrate was the coup. I suppose you have different views when you become a Christian. You know there was discrimination against the Indians - I didn't believe in that. I believe in hard work and when government comes around saying that, you know, they are doing this for peace, I don't really believe that.

I lodged my first application with the New Zealand Embassy in Suva, in September 1999. But I was unsuccessful. I was just one point below the minimum points. And then, in July 2000 the Embassy rang me. My application, was still there. They said, *“The minimum has just dropped down to where you are at the moment so if you want to, you can lodge another application.”* So I did. It took them just a month - this was straight after the coup when the country was still in, you know, upheaval. I was just *amazed!* It took me a couple of months to tie up all loose ends in Fiji before I came over on 22nd November 2000.

I got my first degree from the University of the South Pacific in Suva. That’s where all the Pacific Island governments send their students. The immigration people just had a look at my degree and said, *“Oh this is fine – it’s recognised by the NZQA”*. But the other government departments don’t seem to think highly of it. My expectation was that I would be able to get a job no problem, something similar to what I was doing in the Bank - I had worked in the Bank’s Reserves Management Unit, you know, foreign reserves management. And then I had worked the last five years with our research unit.

When I was first looking for a job I contacted the Employment Service. I had regular contact with my case manager, but that wasn’t very helpful. Maybe because the type of job that I expected was not available through them. I mean, they offered me positions which I felt I was over-qualified for - you know, clerical work and things like that.

I just went through the Wednesday and Saturday papers and I applied for all the positions that I believed I could do - in statistics, economics related work. I applied for all that and I was unsuccessful. I had lots of interviews but they were all unsuccessful. I was told that what the employers need is what I don’t have, and that is, the New Zealand work skills. Truly I don’t know what they mean by that because I know the type of work that I do, and I know I am capable of doing anything that would have been put across my path, But all I have is those rejection letters after the interviews, and I ... its very disappointing.

I’d say I lodged one application a week for the first four months. Well, not four months, because by February I had made up my mind that if I couldn’t get a job then I

might as well do a skills upgrade and that was why I enrolled at Victoria in 2001. I was told that it would be easier to get into government service with an MPP degree. I did full time studies and I graduated with an MPP in May 2003.

But again, I want to emphasise that for me the spiritual side of things is just as important for me. So after graduating in May I enrolled in one of the Bible colleges in Wellington for the six month certificate in Christian Studies. I thought that if I finish that in six months I can start looking for a job. I completed the certificate in December and since then I've been applying all over the place for a job.

Apart from the frustrations with you know, being unemployed, in fact it's very humiliating, because I know I can do any work that's put before me, and I don't want to be, you know, sitting around home every day. The interview I went to yesterday was for a job with Pack and Save on the checkout - it has come down to that. Basically I'm just scrounging around for a job. I'm just trying to get something better than the \$206 a week that I get from Work and Income.

Last year I sent my CV to almost all the employment agencies and I did not receive any acknowledgement. I suppose it's who you know - so much for your qualifications! That puts you at a disadvantage if you're coming from another country. You don't have those networks.

It's very humiliating, being on the dole. And, you know, I'm a hard worker and it's very hard when it's come down to this - that for the last ten months I have been unemployed. Yeah, it's really hard. I find it ..., very demeaning being on the dole. I pay board and live with a family. I can't afford to live in a flat on \$206. It's so expensive in Wellington.

It's come down to - in the last month or two - I just said, "*Lord, you know, if I cannot get a job in the secular arena, why don't you open up another arena for me where I can go into, you know, a work context where you feel I can be more useful for you here in New Zealand?*" And that's why I've been thinking of going back to Bible College next year, to do the last six months and then just work amongst the Pacific people. Not

necessarily just the Fijian people, anybody who I can work with. It's a broad area, but I feel I can be useful there.

I don't think ... well, put it this way, I never have come across any racism or anything. Maybe it's been subtle, you know, during my interviews and stuff like that but its always nothing to be worried about, not for me. I'm not worried about racism. Like I said, I guess the only problem is I don't have the required New Zealand work experience - that track record of regular work in a government department. But I read the paper and watch TV almost every day and I read and hear about problems in the government departments – things going wrong and I think, “*Man, I could do that, I could fix that*”.

I enjoy being here, living in Wellington. Most of my friends and associates are from church. I attend a church that's what I might call a vibrant church. It's just down Tory Street. Also, one of the things that I spend my benefit on is being a member of the Bodyworks gym, so I socialise a lot with the people from the gym. Not in the sense that we go out nights and stuff, but whenever we meet at the gym on Saturday mornings, we chat. I have spoken to people at the gym about almost everything and most of them have been very encouraging with their suggestions and recommendations on how to get into the job market - very encouraging indeed. Similarly in church. The majority of members work and they have given me helpful hints in how to secure a job, contacts for part-time and day jobs and above all, they pray for me and my situation and encourage me.

I am really committed to staying in New Zealand. I am thinking of going back to Bible College to complete the programme. All I have to do is another six months to get a one year certificate. Then I could go into a to full time ministry, working among the Fijians in New Zealand and maybe the occasional trip back home.

So I just have to get a job. You know, even a mundane job - filling counters in shops. Now I have a new case manager. She is different from the one I had before – she follows up with whatever we agree to do. She's given me a job search folder, where I can keep my records of all that I've done in one month, and then we go through that

whenever she calls me. So, she's taking a very active part in my job search. I've just told her, "*Look I'm prepared to do any, any type of work - manual, physical hard work, I'm willing to put in the hard yards, as long as I get anything that's better than the \$206 that I get.*"

An Environmental Policy Advisor from the UK

My name is Sarah. I am 35 years old and I come from the United Kingdom. I have an honours degree in environmental chemistry from Edinburgh University and a masters degree in environmental engineering from Imperial College, which is the University of London.

I came to New Zealand for the first time about four and a half years ago, on holidays. I had an uncle who had been living here, in Dunedin, so I came to see him, and travelled around. A work colleague back in Oxford, told me that if I was in Wellington to call in and say hello to an old friend of his. Now, his old friend happened to be the Chief Executive for the (Government Organisation), unbeknown to me. As it turned out, she wasn't there but I chatted with the HR people.

I went back to the UK after my holidays but I kept in touch with those HR people, just friendly emails and what have you. And then a possibility of a position in an energy team in the Ministry come up with the possibility of a one year contract. Well I spoke to them, I think in April of 2001, but nothing happened until the November when I contacted them again to say, "Hey, I've got a new address, how's the weather?" -that's the kind of exchange of emails that we had. And they said, "Hey, that job we talked to you about early this year is still available, would you be interested?" And before I knew what was happening, I had resigned from my job and packed up my house to get to New Zealand to start in February. That was in 2002. This February, I'll have been in New Zealand for three years.

I ran around like a headless chicken before I left the UK, to secure a work permit and residency. My qualifications and work experience were absolutely essential for me to meet the points requirement, there's no way that I could have got in otherwise. When I was applying, they changed the points system several times, so it was touch and go as to whether I was still able to meet those requirements. I needed a job, I needed my two degrees, and points for the number of years work experience - all of those factors were essential. It was either that, or I needed to find, you know, a husband.

When you call up the New Zealand High Commission in the UK to ask for help, it's one pound a minute, and invariably you're talking to someone who's a Chinese or Indian and it's very hard to understand them, so you can see the pounds ticking by. I was calling to enquire whether it made more sense for me to apply for a work permit or for residency because there are a lot more things that you need to secure for residency like x-rays and doctor's certificates and police reports and all those sorts of things, compared to a work permit. So when I was calling up the New Zealand High Commission in London, this particular time it cost me thirty pounds because I was on the phone for half an hour. I couldn't understand what the first lady was trying to explain to me so one of her colleagues then took over. The first one was Chinese and the second was Indian. But anyway, that's probably how it is, there, working in London.

And so, I came out on a one-year contract. It was an opportunity to do something different. And I always thought, I would like to live in New Zealand and I didn't want to be sitting around in ten years time thinking, "I wonder what would have happened if I'd gone there."

I worked at the (Government Organisation) and that was all good, except about eight months into the job the Ministry had a big reorganisation. In the meantime the people in my team largely dissipated and moved off to other jobs. I myself identified a job opportunity at another (Government Organisation). I interviewed for a job that they were advertising through (a recruitment consulting agency), and they then contacted me to say that I'd come second to the incumbent. So the guy who was doing the job in a contracting capacity got the permanent job. He'd been doing that job for 18 months, so it was no big surprise. But they came back to me and said, "We'd be interested in offering you something else;" - it was another analyst position.

Now, all this time I'm at a level where I'm an analyst or an adviser with a salary of \$67,000 - still not a scratch on what I was earning in the UK. The salary that I came out here on, I think was \$56,000 from the (Government Organisation). I left the UK on a salary of 32,000 pounds, which is in the high nineties if you convert it to dollars, and I was a senior consultant in an environmental consultancy in the UK.

So I went to (Government Organisation) and I have to say it was the most unpleasant and disappointing working experience that I've ever had. When I left, for the first time in my life I left without another job to go to. I was about to be unemployed for the first time in my life, and on the very last day of my employment, my application for residency was approved. So that was a small bonus. But that was a lot of effort and all of a sudden I find myself unemployed.

At that time my partner - I met him in New Zealand - and I had a flat in town and a house up the Kapiti Coast where we spent the weekends. We didn't stay in our house during the week because of the trip into town every day. When I resigned from (Government Organisation), it was a case of having to, you know, tighten our belt a little bit. So we had to give the flat up in town.

I'm still not quite sure how people get jobs here. I think it's a little bit of knowing somebody. I mean, there's always an element of knowing the right person wherever you are, but it seems to me that when you write on-spec letters here, people don't respond. If you apply for positions in the newspaper, then that's how you get a response, and if they're interested in you, they'll call you for interview. But I have to say, that process hasn't entirely been satisfactory either.

I had an interview at (a government Ministry) for a senior adviser position and I got down to the last three. About three weeks later they called me and said, "Oh, um, we're actually looking for someone with an agricultural background." And I was completely taken aback and I said, "Oh, you didn't mention that at the interview." "Oh, didn't we? Oh yeah, well I suppose we were just having a look to see what was out there." So I thought, "You have raised my hopes and wasted my time -my CV has absolutely nothing to do with agriculture. And only by going out and looking at what's there, do you realise what you need in your organisation." So that just completely sucked.

My experience of recruitment consultants has been, if an organisation has asked them to advertise a position and line up some interviewees, that's when they are interested in you. They don't work to get you a job. In the UK there are a wealth of recruitment agencies. They will work to get you a job, because they will get as commission, I don't

know what the percentage is, but say, oh 10 percent of your annual salary - that's what the employer will pay them for finding you. So it's in their interest to keep in touch. "How are things going? Are you still looking? What kind of things are you looking for?" - because that's how they make their money. But with the agencies in New Zealand, they don't work on your behalf. They will advertise for an employer, and organise the interview process, and the testing process and things, but that's all.

(A recruitment company) gave me a call about a position that was being advertised at MoRST, the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology. I went for a panel interview and I'm still waiting to hear what the outcome was. That's probably about three months ago. I took it as read that there was nothing coming of it, because they didn't call up to give me any feedback.

In addition to that, there've been two sets of jobs advertised in the paper by Housing New Zealand. One lot were just at the end of May of this year, and then again I think about August last year. And they were, you know, project manager jobs for community regeneration and energy efficiency projects. And I put in an application on both occasions, and I'm still waiting to have an acknowledgement of receipt.

Because of the energy experience that I have, and the community aspects of the work that I've done, I think I would be particularly suited to those jobs. And I have twelve year's worth of experience - you know project management is what I *do*. I think what grates on me most is that they didn't have the decency to even acknowledge an application. If they advertised again, and even if I was inclined to stay in New Zealand, I wouldn't bother applying. If they can't be bothered to respond, well ...

Fortunately for me, I was offered a job about two weeks after I left (Government Organisation) by a guy I met through the work that I was doing at both the (Government Organisations). I had used him as a sounding board before I left ECA. I needed someone to talk to about where to go, where to start to look for jobs, you know, how do things happen here because things in the UK tend to happen a little bit differently. In the UK, you get your CV together, and you send it out to several say environmental consultancies, or whatever. The next thing you know, you've got three or four

interviews lined up. People here don't even respond to on-spec letters, which is really a bit demoralising. They don't even have the decency to respond.

So, this guy that I had met before (he was a director of a private consulting company) came along and said, "We've thought about the chats we've had with you, and we'd like you to come on board with us." The difference! And that has turned out to be really good. I will always appreciate the fact that he threw me a lifeline. But I've decided now to go back to the UK.

I've met a couple of people here that have been really enlightening in terms of the work that I have been able to do. I've met a number of really completely useless managers who are in very senior positions and I'll never understand how they got there, but equally I've met other managers who I have an enormous amount of respect for, and from whom I've learned a lot. I guess I've a little bit of a jaded opinion of how the government machine works, and how things happen, because this is the first time I've ever worked in the public sector - I've always worked in the private sector. So, on the face of it, I now go back to the UK with that additional experience. But I'm not quite sure whether I go back with more or less - I certainly go back with less money, that's for sure.

I've spent a lot of my savings during the time that I've been here. New Zealand is so far away from anywhere else. You know, when you're in the UK, you think when you are in New Zealand you can just nip over to Australia. You don't just nip over to Australia - it's expensive to get to Australia. It's not like jumping on a plane for ten pounds and going to Spain for the weekend, or France or Germany or Italy or Ireland. There's just so many opportunities there.

A lot of people overseas, will say, "Oh yeah, New Zealand - clean, green, great place to bring up children." Personally, I've not actually seen such a clean, green country. I've also seen a lot in the media, here, and seen it first hand. A lot of people are living in poverty, there are serious issues with child abuse, with drugs, with alcohol. I'm not quite sure where the perception is coming from about how fantastic a country this is to bring up children. Don't get me wrong. Those issues are in the UK as well. So to me

you know, there's no difference. But the perception is that this is paradise, and it's far from paradise.

New Zealand is not the paradise that people make you think it is before you come. I've had other friends here from the UK who have all gone back. Some of them have stayed long enough to get a passport and then left. But, financially you struggle, and also, for some of them, they just can't get jobs in areas that they've done you know three and four year degrees in.

I also have to say that what I find one of the most irritating things – both my husband and I - we are so sick and tired of listening to the whole Maori debate on the radio. Who gives a damn about the foreshore and seabed issue? You really get a sense that this country will never mature and move on, because those issues are always in the way. There are two sets of people, and when you hear the Maori leaders on the TV, it's always, "Our people, our people". And this government seems to use those issues almost as smoke screens, and forgets about the real issues. You know, the fact that the roads are sub-standard, the rail system is sub-standard too, the services are just crap. And what are we doing? We're spending weeks and months and years in court arguing about who owns what land. And, it's almost like there's no incentive for them to resolve it.

It's almost like there's reverse racism in this country. I absolutely detest being referred to as a Pakeha. That's just completely unacceptable because it labels me as something. 'Pakeha' has I think, been used on occasions in a not so nice kind of way. When I applied to come to New Zealand I wasn't given any information on the relationship between white New Zealanders and Maori, and the whole Treaty of Waitangi thing. The only time that I learned anything about it, was when I worked for the (Government Organisation). They sent a number of their staff on Treaty training courses. I think the (Government Organisation) bends over backward on this issue. They sing waiata at staff meetings, no other department does that kind of thing. I found the Treaty training very valuable, because it taught me a little bit of history that I understand that a lot of New Zealanders won't even have been taught. And it's almost like historically the country has been in denial that there ever was a history, in terms of how land was taken

away from Maori. I accept that that happened, and that it was wrong. But it should be put right, put to bed, and let's move on. Instead, there almost seems to be value in drawing out the whole issue as long as possible.

I have some very special friends here that I'll miss terribly but I think they fully understand the reasons why I'm going. They're perhaps a little bit older and, you know, their own sons and daughters are doing their OE in the UK or whatever, or have just come back so they can see that there are opportunities overseas that there aren't here. I met those people mostly through work.

When I came at first, on the weekend I volunteered at the cat shelter up in Brooklyn. Just, you know, as another way of meeting people. So on the weekend, I would go to the cat shelter, voluntary work, and that's actually where I met another English girl and her partner now husband, and I'm still in touch with them. They went back to the UK probably after about a year I think. She had a degree in toxicology but couldn't get a job here - ended up working in tele sales. He was an accountant, so he was easier to put in a box - he actually did get a job in his field. Now they have both gone. They went initially to Australia, and then back home.

They were really disappointed about the availability and quality of accommodation that they could find in New Zealand. In the UK when you're earning a decent salary, you can at least afford to live in a house that's well insulated and centrally heated and has double glazing. You don't find that here. I lived in a flat in Mt Cook that was about four years old, and it didn't have double glazing - it's not the norm here. Although, it is on the increase, particularly in the South Island. This flat was so, I think inadequately built that it couldn't breathe. In the morning, I'd wake up and the condensation on the inside of the windows was such that there would be streams of water running down the windows! They're just badly built.

Now I'm living out on the Kapiti Coast. It's fantastic to be so close to the beach, and everything, but two and a half hours of my day is taken up by travelling - a round trip of 100 kilometres on a road that quite frankly is like a back road, not a main highway, or a motorway as I would call it, out of the capital city. Obviously, the other option I have is

taking the train. But quite frankly the trains are so old and so uncomfortable and quite often very unreliable, especially when a freight train breaks down, you know on a one track system. It's just crap.

But don't get me wrong. I know that equally there are problems in the UK and it's not like I've never sat in a traffic jam till I came to New Zealand. But jeez, we're talking about just over four million people, and not even half a million in Wellington.

And it can take me an hour and 50 minutes to drive 50 k's!

So I'm going back to the UK. I have secured a manager's position in a charity organisation. I have a flat there that I rented out when I left. My husband, I think, has a good chance of finding a job there. He's already got favourable responses from recruitment consultants in the UK. And as I say, they have every incentive to pursue him because *they* will get a proportion of his salary as commission for getting him into the job. So we're very hopeful of him finding something.

I married him in June this year, but I was very adamant to get my residency status independent of him just out of principle. Up until recently I could have applied for citizenship this February after having lived in the country for three years. But they changed the rules, recently, and now you can't apply for citizenship until you've been in the country for five years. I could apply for citizenship now that I'm married to a New Zealander, but I've no inclination to. I have a returning residents visa, and if I want to come back to the country, I can. And then, in addition to that, I'm married to a New Zealander so, you know, if (my husband) was coming back, I could come easily, as his partner. But that is not likely to happen in the immediate future.

An Engineer and Industrial Scientist from Russia

My name is Vladimir. I am 42 years old and I am a qualified mechanical engineer. I am married with one child. She was four years old when we migrated. I came from the Soviet Union, a place just south of Moscow. I left because of the criminal activity, Mafia activity, going on. Between 1994 and 1995 that was the time of the great division of Russia between Mafia clans. The criminal activities were horrible. Like cars being blown up in the street killing people walking nearby. For me it was apparent that there's not going to be democracy in Russia. With all the changes - it was not just political changes or economical changes it was a widescale change and not leading to greater democracy. The class to which my family used to belong were quickly disappearing because there were less qualified jobs, jobs were very hard to find. Also there were changes in the morality of people. All these changes made us decide to go.

In Russia I was a design engineer for 12 years. I have a degree from Moscow State Technical University. My qualifications are difficult to explain because the style of qualifications in Russia at that stage were different to the other world. I have six years of full-time study in engineering and science and that is like a Masters in Engineering in New Zealand. In the fourth year we had exactly the same papers as for a science degree at a New Zealand university and we had the same level of research projects that people have at science faculties here. The Honours level qualification at Victoria University actually goes below my qualifications from Russia. After four years study we then had another year of full-time study and a one-year design project – the equivalent of a masters degree. These design projects were often leading to publication but sometimes the designs were classified and then they could not be published. The majority of people from my university were employed on things like the spaceship programmes or defence programmes. My project was on a system for, how to explain it, a new generation of nuclear power plants. My work was not published.

I went to the New Zealand Embassy to apply for residency. There were a number of reasons why I decided to go to New Zealand. At that stage it was about the same conditions to immigrate to Australia but when we thought about Australia – driest continent, containing the most poisonous reptiles - Australia was a little bit harsh for

this reason. We thought about going to Canada – the choice was New Zealand or Canada.

The reason for going to New Zealand was that we had an assessment from NZQA of our qualifications so at least we had some legal acceptance of our qualifications whereas if we were to go to Canada, we did not have that. On the basis of age, qualifications, job skills – I was given enough points. I didn't need to have a job to come to New Zealand.

But the equivalent mark they gave me for my qualifications was Bachelor of Engineering – this level of qualification didn't exist in Russia because it was considered that someone with that amount of study was uneducated – people with basic knowledge but without any professionalisation. At that point I thought, okay if I have a Bachelor I guess I can apply for some jobs as a Bachelor and work from there. I was quite enthusiastic – I thought I could go to a prospective employer and say, “Okay, here is my qualification, accepted by NZQA, and here is my experience. We can work it out together.” But that didn't happen.

When we left Russia all my friends were already abroad. The situation is now that I have friends in Washington, Baltimore, Detroit, Boston, New Hampshire, Colorado, Adelaide. These are the people who were friends at the time of our emigration and who moved about the same time we moved.

We came straight to Wellington. We had one Russian family to meet us and we were staying with that family for a few days before we found a suitable flat. We had a flat in Russia. We sold that and some of our things and that gave us enough to buy our tickets and get a flat. But within a month, all the money was gone. It wasn't much. It was just enough for us to be able to buy some appliances and things. When we moved out of Russia we had to leave a lot of things behind because we could only bring one suitcase per person – airline restrictions.

When we arrived, at that stage Social Welfare was taking good care of people and we got unemployment benefit. We were not planning to stay on social welfare. For us it

was I would say, a soft landing. Soon the money we bought with us was gone. Then the problems started.

I started looking for a job. I looked everywhere. I was looking in newspapers, going down the streets knocking on doors asking the people what kind of job they have. Some people were keen to help. They were taking my CV and arranging some contacts.

I was registered with the New Zealand Employment Service and we were supposed to report there about how our finding a job was going, but at the time that I was coming to that office, I was looking at the type of jobs they offered and they were mostly trade jobs. For me that was okay. At that stage it was very much about just getting a job and doing it. But again, I didn't have any certificate in English saying that I was trade qualified. And since I am not trade qualified, since I am an engineer, then I don't know how to use, for example, a shovel, or some hammer or something else. But the thing is that my qualification in Russia included knowledge of how to use a variety of machinery. To get an ME, I had to know for example, how to use a lathe - what kind of machinery or tool you use for what kind of job.

All the employment consulting companies wanted money which I didn't have. So I would go to the Employment Service and they would say "*Did you find a job?*" and I would say "*No, I didn't find a job*" and they would say "*Well, were you looking for a job?*" and I would say "*Yes, I was looking for a job*". And I was providing some letters showing my applications for jobs and the rejection letters which I received, to prove that I was making some efforts to find a job. And after that, well some officers were quite keen to help and they would start asking questions about what kind of qualification I have, what kind of things I was capable of. But that was way over the heads of those officers. They couldn't even comprehend what I was talking about. They kept saying I was a nuclear physicist. They didn't understand what a mechanical engineer does.

Before I left New Zealand, the people we already knew here were looking in the papers and they were telling us that there were some engineering jobs and we also saw those jobs in the papers at the New Zealand Embassy. We enquired about job finding assistance at the Embassy and they referred me to the Dominion and the Herald and told

me to read them, and write letters. But to find a job from Russia in New Zealand was an impossibility because no-one will employ someone without meeting them. Nothing was done by the NZ Embassy except refer me to newspapers. But to get a job I needed to be here, talking to people.

But then again, I was prepared to do any job. In the Soviet Union at the time when I grew up, the attitude was, every job is dignifying. Every job is supposed to be appreciated. So with such a vision I came here, and I was prepared. I did not feel embarrassed or put down to be working as a labourer. That is something that upset me here – that attitude about people at that level.

So I went to the New Zealand Employment Service and I didn't get any real help from them. Once they set up a seminar, 'How to find a Job'. There were 30-40 people there – mostly Russians and Yugoslavians - and they were explaining to us how to find a job. And they were asking, "*Did you try this way?*" and we said "*Yes, we tried that*" and they said "*Did you try this way?*" "*Yes we tried. Yes we tried that, that and that*". And they said "*And what was the result?*" And we said "*We are here. We are at this seminar waiting for the New Zealand Employment Service to give us some help to find a job.*" And the answer was, "*You need to try again*". That was the end of the seminar. They presented us with certificates, they shook our hands and wished us success. Nothing else. They couldn't cope with people at this level.

Everyone was writing letters. What did we get in response? "*We wish you every success*" or "*You are not successful in this application*" or "*You are over-qualified for this position*". This is very much the sort of answer I was getting. But everyone – the Russians and Yugoslavians were just laughing at that response. Because our attitude is, if we have applied for a job, this is our interest. And we are not looking at our qualification saying what we are *capable* of. We want to do *this* job. And to say to us, "You are not good enough for the job because you could do more" is kind of strange.

I went looking for work in a suit – white shirt and tie with my resume and qualifications documents and examples of projects I was working on back in Russia and some drawings I had made from AutoCAD. At that stage I had a certificate from Hutt Valley

Polytech in AutoCAD – a software package very suitable for drawings and design and I had examples of drawings I had made in Russia also using AutoCAD. The idea was to show an employer that I had the ability to do design, the ability to do drawings. I was going around knocking on the doors of companies, just going into reception and talking to people, asking if they had something available and I expressed that I was keen to do any possible job.

One company I called on, I spoke with the owner of the company and described what I was doing and tried to show the best of my capabilities. He was smiling, nodding, he didn't say a word, he was just expecting me to keep going, keep going. There was no reaction. I thought that obviously he didn't have any intentions to employ me. I suggested I work as a volunteer. Then he just clicked on straight away – it looked like he was expecting something like this. He said “*A volunteer? Okay let's go and start*”. And he grabbed me and took me straight to the locker room and gave me overalls and said “*Okay, put it on and let's go*”. I said, “*But I don't have any suitable clothes*” – I was in a suit with a tie and my dress shoes, no safety boots – but he said “*You want to work? Okay you go. You don't want? Okay you leave*”. I suggested I come tomorrow morning but he said “*No, you want a job? Let's go and do it.*” Finally I said “*Okay, let's go and do it*”.

He suggested that I work for a couple of weeks as a volunteer. After one week he said “*Okay, we are going to pay you*”. He offered me about the same pay as I was getting from the unemployment benefit and when he employed me he was actually paid from the Employment Service half of what I was earning so in fact he was paying me something like \$4.25 an hour – I was a very expensive worker for him. At first I was using a mitre saw to cut different lengths and shapes from metal and sweeping the floor.

One day the engineer called me into his office and asked me “*What is this?*” He had some parts I had cut – about 20 pieces. They were all the same length, they were supposed to be all the same length. He said “*How did you manage to do that?*” Everybody was looking puzzled. I understood that they were expecting me to do a much rougher job. The engineer had been writing down instructions for me but I suggested he

should just give me the drawings and I could work from those. He was totally surprised that I could read drawings.

I was doing that for a while and then I started to practice welding. I became a reasonably good welder. I found that I could weld better than the man I was working with. He had done a welders course at polytech and couldn't weld better than me. Once the engineer was offsite for a few weeks and the boss was away also. I was asked by the boss's wife, who was the accountant, to help because they were desperate. So I had to go on the boss's computer and pull up some drawings, then purchase the materials, do the welding, assemble the items and manage some other guys to help me. I could do that – I was trained for that. Finally the items were shipped to Auckland. When the engineer returned, he saw the quality of the things that were made while he was away and he was surprised. He asked "*Who did that?*" and I said "*I did*". But he wouldn't believe it. I reckon that at that stage the engineer was uncomfortable. He was understanding that I was very low paid, but I was doing the job that he was doing – or part of his job. My salary had not been increased from the time I was on a subsidized wage – I was being paid \$8.50 an hour. Over-time was paid, after 15 hours, at time and a quarter. After 60 hours, I was paid one and a half times.

Everyone was expected to work on Saturday. The engineer asked me to work on Sundays as well. Because I am Russian, I come from a communist country and so I probably don't believe in God and don't go to church. So I could come and work on Sunday. I told him "*No, I go to church on Sunday*".

I was doing a job making seats for a stadium. We were working 24 hours shifts. One day I was working a normal day and then the boss came to me and asked if I could work longer – if I could stay until mid-night. I said okay, but I will start back tomorrow at lunch time. He said that was okay. So the next day I came to work and the others said to me "*Hey, where've you been? You were supposed to be here at 8 o'clock.*" I told them the boss had agreed that I could come in later. Then they started to make comments about what I was doing – what I was doing with my wife. They were using coarse language. I don't know how that is for New Zealanders, but for Russians that is extreme abuse. In Russia I would have been entitled to defend my dignity, even if it was direct

assault. They just didn't abuse me, they abused my relationship with my wife. I just stood there, I nearly passed out – I just couldn't expect such an attitude. But that gave them quite a lot of laughter and fun. So, I just turned around and I stopped talking to them. I didn't talk to them the next day or the day after. No-one said sorry.

After that I went to the Employment Service. They said they could not help but they gave me a number for a lawyer. Then I discussed the situation with a friend of mine and he said if I take this matter to the Courts then probably I will never get employment in New Zealand. The Employment Service said I could just go home and they would pay me the benefit without any stand-down period. But I said I didn't want the benefit, I wanted a job and I would be waiting to hear soon from them about some possible position. I was trying to put the Employment Service into the situation that they will actually find me employment.

Soon after that I applied for a job with (a construction company). When I got the job I gave my old employer five working days notice. He was very upset, he tried to make me give longer notice. Later he employed another man to take my place and paid him \$16 an hour.

I worked for (the construction company) from 1997 to 1999. I left because of their attitude. Kiwis were paid better than me – even though their qualifications and skills were not up to my level. I was working overtime and also on call and even if I was called back 2 times in the night, I was expected to be back at work at 7.30 in the morning. They did not give me the 8-hour stand-down time required by New Zealand law. I was the most qualified person on the operations staff but I was not selected for team leader – that job was given to a kiwi – a plumber with a one-year diploma in management from Open Polytechnic.

I found out about the student allowance and so I decided to go back to university. I studied physics and electronics. While I was a student I spoke with a lecturer about getting a job over the summer. He put me in contact with IRL. I was given a 3 month student scholarship. During this time I made sample designs for the team and they were very pleased with my output. Then they understood that I was a qualified engineer. The

next summer they called the Faculty of Science to ask me to come back for the summer. When that scholarship was about to finish I asked them if I could stay longer. They gave me a six-month contract. After six months, they gave me a permanent position. But again, I was paid below the average New Zealand salary and even now I am paid \$10,000 less than the average IRL salary for the tasks I am doing.

I have been employed here now for 2 years. Finally I feel myself human because my skills are accepted and appreciated and people treat me as a decent person. No-one questions my honesty.

My wife got a Masters degree in chemistry from Victoria. Then she got a scholarship to do a PhD and now she is the recipient of a FRST Post-Doc Fellowship. So she is doing fine. But she has had to repeat the same qualifications she already had in Russia. She is also employed here now.

Reflecting back on my experience, New Zealanders judge people on their language skills. Someone speaking in broken English, his qualifications are questioned straight away – they are considered less qualified. I have seen a lot of people who are friendly but as soon as they hear my accent, they stop smiling and turn away. They have no interest. It's a struggle sometimes to get a decent service. Quite often people treat me as a dumb person. They make out I didn't understand what was agreed – I understand perfectly. They try to charge me for things I didn't ask them to do. Several times this has happened. The same has happened to my wife.

My English was not good when I first came to New Zealand. With the new standard, I probably would not have been accepted for migration. But language is easy to build up once you are in the country. We went to ESOL classes for 4 months. After 2 months we didn't learn anything. They need to improve the standard.

When my daughter came to New Zealand she was four years old. She didn't speak a word of English. She has just finished Intermediate School and her report assessment for English is outstanding and she has distinction in math and science. At her school she

experienced racial abuse – being picked on and called names. I went to see the Principal about it but he did nothing so in the end I sent her to another school.

The Russian attitude is, it's better to have a bad peace than a good war. But when I have tried to find a moderate solution it is always treated as a weakness. Now I know if anything happens, I am prepared to defend myself on the spot. Kiwis have forced me to be more aggressive than I used to be.

There are cultural differences that make it difficult. Russians prefer to speak straight – “yes” means yes, “no” means no. If the choice is between being polite and being honest, a Russian will always choose to be honest but with that choice, kiwis will always choose to be polite, they don't say what they think.

I have friends – mainly Germans. I have some kiwi friends – husbands of Russian women - those guys understand the cultural differences. Actually I have no problems with people who accept differences. If they don't accept people who are different then there is a problem. It would be exactly the same situation in Russia. Some people accept differences, some don't.

I still don't feel like a Kiwi. I will stay because I have no choice. Before I didn't have a job, or a job where I was paid enough so I didn't have money to go somewhere else. After nine years, finally I've got a job and I'm paid enough to have some savings. But it will take maybe five years to save enough and then, what is the point of leaving when you are almost looking forward to retirement? I have no choice. If I had a choice, I would go to Canada because there are more possibilities there and I have friends from Russia there. But I would only go there if I had a decent job. I already had this experience of buying second-hand furniture, clothes, second-hand everything, and it is quite embarrassing. I don't want to go to Canada and find myself in that situation. Also, it's not just a job for me or a job for my wife. We are supposed to both have jobs.