

# NURSING JOURNEYS

INTERNATIONALLY-EDUCATED NURSES RECOUNT THEIR INDIVIDUAL STORIES ON THEIR ROAD TO BECOMING **NURSES IN CANADA**



## OVERVIEW:

- Ian Canogoran: a Nurse from the Philippines
- Now a Registered Nurse in Canada
- Living & working in the province of New Brunswick
- Now also a Permanent Resident of Canada
- OMNI College graduate

## Ian was a nurse in the Philippines...

He is now a Canadian Registered Nurse, living and working in the beautiful eastern Canadian province of New Brunswick.

At first, the idea to come to Canada was instigated by his sister, who had migrated to Canada before him. Through her, he saw all the benefits of living in Canada; from inclusive health care to great education systems, to the friendly people and the high quality of life. He learned through her experiences that he too wanted to get to Canada one day and become a citizen.

Ian did a lot of research to try to figure out the best and quickest path for him to reach the goals he had set. He consulted with many immigration agencies, in hopes of finding a path. He learned about Canada's Federal Skilled Worker program and tried to apply, only to find out he did not qualify. He almost gave up.

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## "I always told myself, if they can do it, then so can I."

One day, Ian learned that Canada offers student visas. He initially applied to study in the province of Quebec, but that province speaks French as their first language.

Unfortunately, the language barrier was just too much of a challenge, not to mention his application for a student visa to a language school in Quebec was denied. It broke all of his hopes.

Ian ended up learning about OMNI College from a few good friends who were already studying at the College. He figured if this could possibly turn into an opportunity for him to become a Canadian nurse and citizen, then he would give it a try.

Today, he is so glad he decided to take that chance.

He began his studies at OMNI College in February 2015.

During his days in class, often there would be OMNI graduates that would drop by to visit the College. Until he heard their stories, he hadn't actually realized just how big or how great the opportunities were for nurses in Canada.

He found inspiration in the journeys they would share during their visits, and as he continued his own studies and gradually began work as a nurse himself, he found the passion to not only excel in his profession, but to become the best nurse he could be.

He explained that: *"The nursing practice in the Philippines is way behind. It's more of a traditional nursing practice. I always wanted to be a nurse anaesthetist or nurse practitioner, but if I stayed in the Philippines it would be close to impossible. Furthermore, the demands of living in a third world country are getting harder and more difficult every year."*



Ian's journey was tough. He said there were "a lot of challenges".

Missing home was a big part of the difficulty. He also didn't realize just how tough and how long the nurse registration process can be. But he remained focused and driven, motivated through his fellow classmates and his sister, and also most importantly from the students ahead of him. *"I always told myself, if they can do it, then so can I."*

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## 20 years of supporting IENs in Canada

By OMNI College

It's been 20 years since the day OMNI College was founded, in a suburb of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Over the course of 2 decades, the College has proudly supported internationally-educated nurses in their quest to become Canadian nurses.

Nurses come to OMNI from all walks of life, and from countries all around

the world. Each of their journeys is unique. Yet they all share the same common goal: to work as nurses in Canada.

In celebration of the College achieving its 20 year anniversary milestone, this Nursing Journeys series was launched to share more details about our students' own unique stories, and how they achieved success here in Canada.



Following his training at OMNI, Ian passed the nursing skills assessments and was required to do just a one-day remediation course.

He passed the NCLEX licensing exam on his first try.

When we asked him what was the most challenging part of all throughout his entire journey, he said "it might be very funny but it's the truth - I had a hard time transitioning to becoming independent."

"Before I came out here, I never washed my clothes or cooked for myself, nor cleaned the house. Back in the Philippines there was always someone who did that for me. And when I arrived here, for the first couple of days I was fine, but then I realized it was really hard! I had to learn to manage my time well in order to get through every day life and school. Doing the laundry, cooking my own food, packing my lunch for school, going out to buy groceries, etc.

It was a very difficult adjustment for me. That was actually the hardest part."

Today, Ian is enjoying his life of freedom.

He has transitioned into life as a Canadian, he is independent and he is self-sufficient.

## Today, Ian is enjoying his life of freedom.

*"I feel like I have more control of my time and my resources. No one can say something or prevent me from doing what I want. During summer, I go hiking and biking with friends here on the island. I feel safe going at any time, just like everyone else. It's quite different in the Philippines, where I used to have to consider my safety and ask permission from my family. When I want to go somewhere, I can go. I love shopping and when I want to do it, I can."*

He also says he loves the people in Canada. He has lived on both sides of the country, from the west coast where OMNI College is, to the east coast in New Brunswick which he now calls "home". He even spent some time living up north with family in the INUVIK Northwest Territories.

He has experienced Canada's big urban cities, more quiet laid back small cities, even remote areas up north. "I am amazed by how diverse, respectful, open-minded and accommodating Canadians are. They/We all acknowledge that we are a multi-cultural country without losing the core of being a Canadian."

Ian is still close friends with many of his fellow classmates from OMNI, and has built friendships with his co-workers as well. They often go biking and hiking together, exploring the nature in the surrounding areas. He has even found friendship in the patients he cares for, and refers to them fondly as his "residents family". Even if many of his friends from OMNI are living in other provinces in Canada, and his family is up north in Inuvik, Ian keeps in touch frequently through social media.

At work, Ian loves his job. He loves that what he studied at school is truly what he gets to practice at work. Also, his thoughts, opinions and the decisions he makes are respected by everyone on his health care team.

*"My colleagues listen to me. They want to hear what I have to say. It's a big responsibility but I like it."*

He is also grateful for the amazing benefits and pay rate as a Registered Nurse in Canada. Compared with his salary in the Philippines, he says "there is just no comparison".

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OMNI College is a government designated, private post-secondary institution in Vancouver, Canada.

The College specializes in preparing Internationally-Educated Nurses for work in Canada.

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## So – did Ian achieve his goal to immigrate to Canada?

Yes. He is now a Permanent Resident of Canada.

After becoming licensed as a nurse in Canada, he qualified for immigration through a program called the Atlantic Immigration Program. He did not need a Post-Graduate Work Permit. Ian noted however that the process can be very stressful. "It can really get out of control. But, if students in OMNI, will just focus on their goal that is to become a nurse in Canada, everything will follow."

"Once they get that license, there are so many ways to become a permanent resident. I never had a post grad work permit. I only had a specific employer work permit which means I already have my license to work as a nurse. The secret is FOCUS. Step by step."

*What do I need to do first, what exam I need to pass, if I can't pass it what are the options, what will I do next. I remember my student mentors, Merrill and Agnes, they told me "If you look at the journey as a whole, you will be stressed and overwhelmed. But try to chop it up. Attack your goals one by one. Later you will realize that you already reached them. You're an RN and a PR. And when you try to look back, you'll be proud of yourself because you made it."*

## The secret is FOCUS. Stey by step.

The journey is tough. But completely worth it. Ian came up against many obstacles where he could have backed out or quit. He could have tried to find some other kind of job and employer that was willing to sponsor him to stay in Canada. But instead, he became even more motivated to stay focused on becoming a nurse in Canada.

He says "There is a difference between a person who wants to live in Canada and work as a nurse, and a person who just wants to work in Canada. I got the best of both. I am a Permanent Resident AND I am an RN now. I guess I deserve a pat on my back....lolz."

### Final words from Ian himself:

"I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the whole team of OMNI. From the admin to the instructors: Louise, Debbie, Marina, Shauna and Camellia, you are the best! From February 27, 2015 the day I arrived in Canada and when Tony picked me up from the airport, my OMNI journey began and until now. My journey continues as I want to help other OMNI grads too as much as I can."

THANK YOU SO MUCH!" ~Ian Canogoran



Ian and fellow IEN classmates at OMNI College Canada