



Kinjal Dagli-Shah is a writer who was born in Mumbai and recently moved to Stouffville with her husband. She will be a regular contributor to the Stouffville Free Press, providing insights on how newcomers are settling into our community. She welcomes feedback from readers.

Welcome Home

By Kinjal Dagli-Shah

A reluctant immigrant. It's what I thought I'd always be at heart, when I married my husband, and by default, his love for Toronto and all things Canadian. But when I moved to Stouffville not too long ago, I was forced to acknowledge the possibility of a change of heart – my love for Mumbai, my home city, notwithstanding.

The 'picture perfectness' of this beautiful town cannot be confined to postcards; indeed, it embraces you with lush green expanses, sweet-smelling air and a neighbourhood that's a veritable botanical garden, blooming with flowers of all shapes, sizes and colours. (It's a happy coincidence that I moved here at the onset of summer).

For a thoroughbred city girl, this was heaven on earth, but one I thought I would quickly get bored of. After all, how long would I entertain myself walking alongside that gently gurgling stream (the 'flood control channel') flowing from Main Street to end up close to the Stouffville

Library? Or the beautiful Reeves Way Blvd. with its perfectly manicured lawns and happy toddlers? Or the quaint boutique shops on Main Street with all their old-world charm?

As life would have you know, beautiful surroundings maketh not the perfect neighbourhood. It's really about the people. The Welcome Wagon: what an ingenious idea, and how it lives up to its name! A member of the Welcome Wagon dropped by laden with a basketful of little gifts from merchants on Main Street and around, and what struck me most was the thoughtfulness of those presents – dishwashing liquid, paper towels, colouring books, flowers, pens – the little things that make settling into your new home just that much more comfortable. Thank you for the welcome, dear wagoners.

As heartwarming as that was, this little town doesn't stop at that. I was worried it wouldn't be as multicultural as I hoped, and that my children (even though I don't have any yet – yes, I'm a bit of a long-term thinker) would

grow up interacting with just one kind of people.

But we're in one of five town homes, and it would be safe to say we have at least five different ethnicities in just this one row. And of course, at parks and in stores, on splash pads and behind cash registers, I've often heard a delightful mix of languages and spotted shades of skin colours that can only speak of harmonious coexistence. While I'm sure it's not all utopian, I'm enjoying the variety for now.

And yet, the idea of 'permanently' living here saddens me at times. Oh, just wait until you want a job, or get a credit card, or even a vegetarian dinner, I told myself in moments of resentment. But when I walked into the neighbourhood branch of one of the biggest Canadian banks, not only did the banker help us through my paperwork but the manager personally came to welcome us and helped me sign up for a credit card (with a small limit) even though I don't have a job yet. That, when his wife was very ill, as I later learnt. I send the couple my most heartfelt

wishes.

And while I haven't actively started looking for a job, this paper welcomed me with open arms, inviting me to contribute my stories and perspectives. Long live the *Stouffville Free Press*! The vegetarian dinners haven't been too difficult to find either, and we have plenty of options.

For this, and Mario's Hair Styling on Main Street, I'm thankful – the adorable Mario gave my husband a smashing haircut, and the ecstasy of finding the 'right' barber so close by is hard to get over.

So in moments of doubt, my Stouffville friends, I try to think of the wonderful people and experiences that await me, and how life can be a breeze here, if only you take time to smell the begonias.

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A Splashy Celebration

Monsoon Madness would have been a more appropriate title for this summer's soggy Moonlight Madness, which was drowned out by severe thunderstorms, but a replay of the popular community get together is planned for Sept. 17.

The BIA event will feature downtown sidewalk sales, one night only specials and an opportunity to indulge in free ice cream at Candlelight and Memories for those who come dressed appropriately in their fall pajamas. It's not mandatory, but you might also want to consider waders and umbrellas, just in case.

Axion Brillinger Insurance will host free face painting for kids, so come on out for an evening of fun, friendship and fabulous bargains.



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