

Saskatoon


Language barrier disappears in Saskatoon mini-magazines created by newcomers

10 'zines detail stories of people who came to city from places like Yemen, Mexico

[Chelsea Laskowski](#) · CBC News · Posted: Feb 03, 2019 8:00 AM CT | Last Updated: February 3, 2019



One participant detailed the experience of becoming a new mother. Her story was transformed into a mini-magazine that launched on Sunday, Feb. 3. (Submitted by Michael Peterson.)

[comments](#) 

People in Saskatoon are getting an inside look into what it's like to move from across the world and settle in the Bridge City.

Ten newcomers, none of whom speak English as their first language, have created special mini-magazines (or 'zines) that use art and short-form ways to tell stories about their lives.

- [Cabinet ministers' presence at yellow vest rallies sends 'wrong message' to Sask. immigrants: NDP leader](#)
- [Mistaken identity trope is 'real life' for many, says Prairie Nurse playwright](#)

Each one is individualized to its creator.

Adel Salim Baaddad decided to write about how he came from Yemen to Saskatoon.

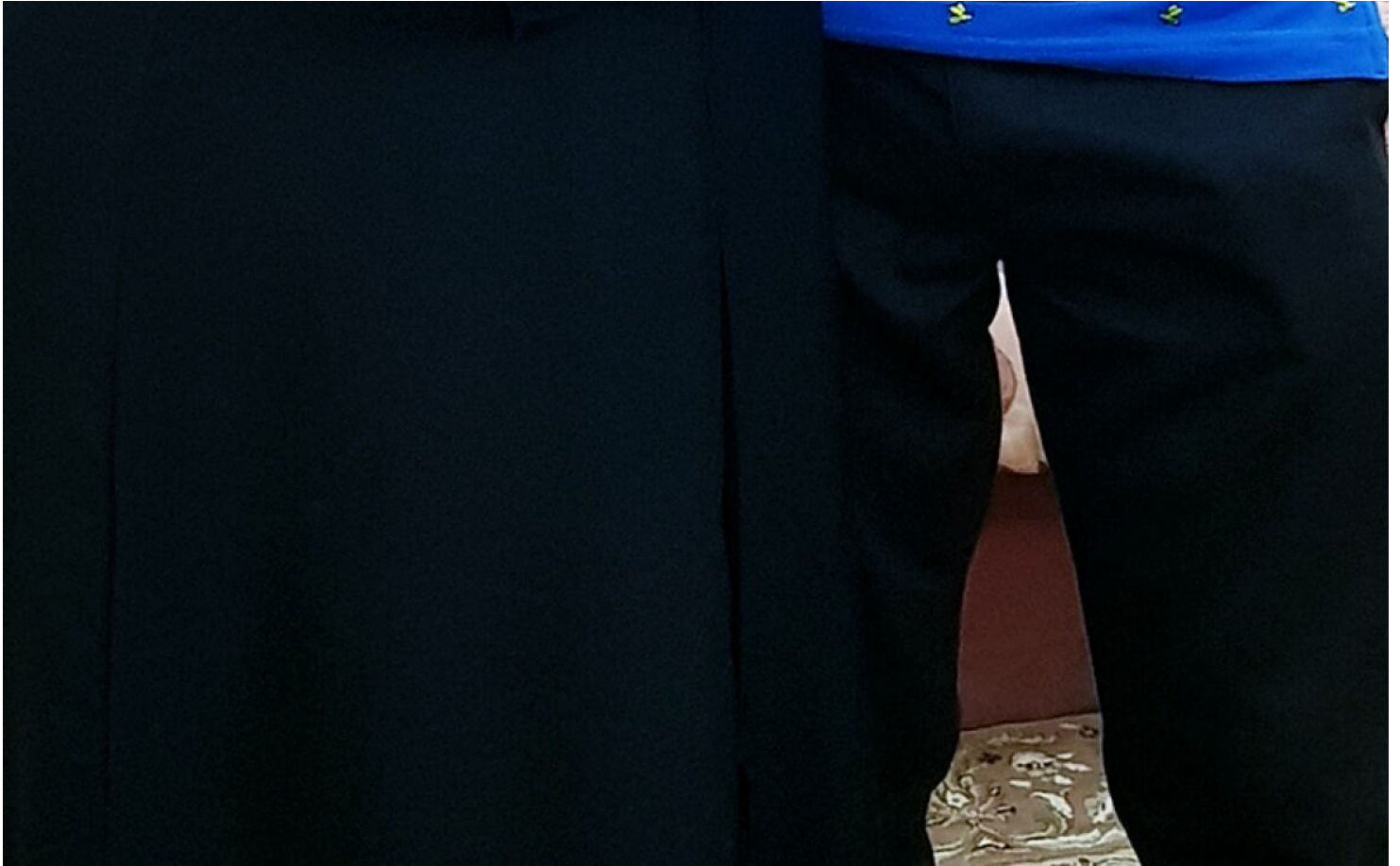
It's a story that involves a well-intentioned scheme — or as Baaddad jokingly calls it, an "evil plan" — to get his mother on board. As it turns out, the plan worked out a little too well.

"I was thinking that if I tell my mother that I will leave them or emigrate to another country she will feel sorry and maybe she will be sad. So I didn't want her to feel that feeling because of me," Baaddad said.

His solution? To tell her gradually.







Adel Salim Baaddad wrote about how he told his mother he was leaving his lifelong home in Yemen to come to Canada. (Submitted by Michael Peterson)

He started off telling her that he'd applied to come to Canada, but placated her by telling her it would take some time.

Then, he decided to convince her of why he needed to move. He conveyed to her how Yemen is not stable and the future doesn't look good. She quickly bought in.

"Then she started blaming me for complaining without doing any action. Every time she sees me sitting in the sofa with a compute she starts blaming me. 'Why are you just sitting here? Why don't you just travel abroad or find a high education?' " Baaddad said with a laugh.

In the end, his family sent him off the day before he boarded his plan to Canada. His mother even packed his bags for him.

Getting 'zines out in the public

After a Sunday magazine launch where the newcomers shared their stories, Void Gallery, which undertook the project in partnership with the Global Gathering Place, intends to work with local coffee shops or other spots that offer public reading materials to have copies out for the public to read.

It's important to get stories like Baaddad's out into the public sphere because they open people up to learn about the lived experience of immigrants rather than viewing them as a singular group, said Michael Peterson, director of Void Gallery.





The love of a new mother is captured in one of the 'zines. (Submitted by Michael Peterson.)

Themes of isolation appear

In the process of finding stories that would work in the 'zine format, one woman talked about how she often found herself comforting other immigrants she met crying in bathrooms because they were struggling to communicate in English.

"It was just this moment of that unseen portion, or just one of those unseen moments about emigrating and all those difficulties," Peterson said.

The 'zine-writing process was an interesting journey for Santillan Lugousi, who is visiting Saskatoon from his home country of Mexico.

Although he'll be leaving Saskatoon in mid-February, he was able to learn about his peers' journeys and hardships as he helped his fellow Spanish-speakers communicate with the staff putting the magazines together.

"I know some people in this project who never had expressed his own ideas by art. So to do this project, it was so good," he said.

For Peterson, it was important to see what kind of creative ideas would come up once they threw grammar and flawless writing out the window.