

## Om Sharma

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Om: Hi, my name is Om Sharma. And I came from India, New Delhi in 1967.

### **On leaving India**

Om: A person like me who's very adventurous and wants to see the world, it's important that I didn't settle down too quickly. [01:00:30:01] I started teaching school when I was only 18 or 19 years old, I progressed and went to university, but still I was not satisfied, though I was helping people and students. But I wanted to do something more.

A couple of my friends had come to Nova Scotia and they were teaching here. One of them said, "They are looking for teachers in case you are interested." [01:01:01:10] What more could I ask for? I applied to the embassy and got my interview. There were a lot of questions. The last question was so interesting. The guy asked me, if you go to Canada and there's no teaching position, what will you do? That was so random question. [01:01:28:21] I said, "Sir, I have two hands and two feet. I can do anything. Teaching is not the only thing in my cards."

And he was so impressed. So I got 98 points out of 100 which was very good. And he said okay.

### **Arriving in Canada**

Om: When I came here, it was very, very delightful. They received me here and I stayed for two, three weeks. [01:01:58:18] And during that period, we interviewed and got jobs teaching school, Lincoln MacMillan High School in Sheet Harbour.

What a strange place, Sheet Harbour, coming from Delhi, cosmopolitan where people are everywhere, and going to Sheet Harbour, four houses on this side, five on the other. And I ask them, "Is that all Sheet Harbour is?" They said, "That's it."

[01:02:27:23] It was exciting but lonesome because, when you leave home, culture, friends and you are in a new place, you have to pay some price but it's still very exciting because I wanted to flourish and help the people here.

### **On Canadian values**

Om: There's a lot to learn from Canadians. [01:02:58:18] Canada is a great country. It's a great opportunity. It's a very open society. It's a multicultural society. They are very caring people.

Multiculturalism is the most important thing. There are some other countries that also have multiculturalism, like India has some multiculturalism, but Canada is the only country you can see that has so many cultures staying together. [01:03:30:22] And the beauty is that all the cultures are flourishing. Their food, their music, their churches, temples, all these things, there is a lot to learn.

### **On helping others**

Om: Robert Kennedy, John F. Kennedy's brother, he said, "You're happiest when you're making the greatest contribution" [01:04:01:14] I really enjoy when I go to schools, for Passages to Canada. My first aim is the same, to encourage, inspire students. After 25 years of my teaching, I met a student in the garage. He was getting his car fixed. And he said to me, "Mr. Sharma, thank you sir. You helped me a lot. Your five minutes talk saved my life." [01:04:30:07] I'm so surprised to look at his face. He has a beard and a moustache. I can't recognize him. I said, "Where did I meet you?" He said, "Harbour View School in Dartmouth, sir. I was little Johnny and in grade six. And you took me out of class and talked to me five minutes." "Why did I take you out?" "Because I was a trouble maker in the class and outside you said to me: "To be or not to be, that is the question. [01:05:00:00] If you behave in the classroom, I will help you after school, lunch time. Otherwise if you don't behave, you will be ending in the principal's office every day and you won't amount to anything." "Sir, I took your advice and I went to university and then I went to supervisor course. Now I am supervisor. I'm making a lot of money, hiring, firing people, telling my children that this is the only formula that works, that you have to respect others to get respect." [01:05:35:08]

### **A word of advice**

Om: Newcomers, I always give them this advice that once you leave your country, think this way: you are going to join some other community. Be part of them. Don't segregate because if you put one foot in one boat and the other in the other boat, where will you go? [01:06:06:10] You will lead to nothing because you will fall right in the water. Same way, when you have moved to some country, be part of it, help them and that way, you are happy and they are happy. You are bringing peace of mind and everything else. Be happy and see things positively. [01:06:36:14] Positivity is the most important thing. Solution is in every problem. If we go and look very closely, it's there.

[End of recorded material]

*Om is a retired teacher of 35 years. He was past President of the Indo-Canadian Association of Nova Scotia and is an active volunteer in his community.*