



Client Feature: Marlyse Kouembi

Our monthly Immigrant Entrepreneurship Newsletter features some of the incredible immigrant entrepreneurs in Alberta that we support, like Marlyse Kouembi and her businesses [Kem's Fashion Manufacturing](#) and [Pasque Flower](#). We spoke with Marlyse about her journey and experience as an immigrant entrepreneur in Alberta.

What is your background?

My husband, Thierry, and I are originally from Cameroon. I moved to Italy in 2004 where I continued to study fashion after receiving a Bachelor of Professional Industry Degree that I had started in Cameroon. I then worked at Dolce & Gabbana for 7 years as a pattern designer. We moved to Montreal, in June 2015, and then we moved to Calgary in September 2015. We are brand new Canadians!



What motivated you to start your own business?

I have had the dream to start my own business since I was living and working in Italy, but it was not an easy task. I was determined to make a name for myself in the fashion industry for many years in Italy, but I was willing to give up what I had established and change countries, due to blatant racism within the industry and in the country, in order to make it happen. We wanted to give our children a safer and better future with lots of opportunities, so we chose Canada.

What has been your biggest challenge as an immigrant entrepreneur in Alberta?

Although my journey has had its difficulties, I always believed that my skills provided me an opportunity to meaningfully contribute to Alberta's increasingly diversifying economy. I wanted to provide opportunities to people who are looking for a brighter future, so I chose to hire newcomers, immigrants like me, to Canada. We are proud that today 90% of our employees came to Canada as refugees and we hired them through our connections with the various settlement services agencies in Calgary. So, our biggest challenge was to find talented workers for this trade.

[Read Marlyse's Story](#)

Featured Partner: AWE



Alberta Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to enabling women to build successful businesses. AWE provides unique programs and services to women at all stages of business through advising, financing, mentoring, and network development.



[More About AWE](#)

Business Coaches vs. Mentors

Why should immigrant entrepreneurs consider both, or at least one?

Entrepreneurship is difficult for everyone, regardless of their cultural and business backgrounds. It's even harder for immigrants as they start a new life and a business in a new province and country, with different business culture and environment.

Many successful business owners know that the "go-it-alone" approach does not lead to business success in the long run. They credit part of their success to having successful and powerful coaches and mentors. This is even more important for immigrant entrepreneurs, as experienced and knowledgeable coaches and mentors help them navigate through uncertainty and confusion.

There is no doubt that both coaching and mentoring are important for entrepreneurs, but they are often confused and interchanged. Beware that both coaches and mentors bring extensive experience and knowledge to the table, however, they do not play the same role:

- Coaches help entrepreneurs achieve success by assisting them with goal and priority setting and keeping them accountable. They offer their service for a fee.
- Mentoring is relationship-focused, and tend to develop into a long-term commitment on a pro-bono basis (free of charge). Mentors focus on providing advice and wisdom based on their experiences, to help entrepreneurs succeed.

Updates & Upcoming Events

Canadian Government Announces Black Entrepreneurship Program

On September 9, the Government of Canada announced investments of up to nearly \$221 million in partnership with Canadian financial institutions to launch Canada's first-ever Black Entrepreneurship Program. The program will include:

- Implementing a new National Ecosystem Fund to support Black-led business organizations across the country
- Up to \$33.3 million in support through the new Black Entrepreneurship Loan Fund that will provide loans of between \$25,000 and \$250,000 for Black business owners and entrepreneurs
- Creation of a new Black Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub that will collect data on the state of Black entrepreneurship in Canada

Program & eligibility details to come.

[Learn More](#)

Business Link Events

Connect with a Business Strategist today!



Copyright © 2020 Business Link, all rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

#500-10150-100 Street NW
Edmonton, AB, T5J 0P6

1-800-272-9675