M: Let's begin with when you first arrived to Canada

Ol: I arrived on April 29 2013?

M: That is very specific. Wow. And what was up as a student visa?

Ol: It was student visa when I came.

M: And what were the motivations behind your migration? Like, what were the main factors you considered in making that decision?

Ol: I think if I had to pick one, I would say the political climate in Mexico. It was the party that used to govern Mexico, and basically turn Mexico into pieces, was going back into power. And everything was getting really dangerous, crime was spiking again. And I was just tired. And also those lack of opportunities, so what happens in Mexico is because of the economy model that is used… the gap between middle class and high class is getting really really big right to the point that right now there's not really a middle class in Mexico. It's either you have a shit ton of money or you're working class and if you lose your job, you're basically homeless. So I was approaching the bottom and and that was just tired. I was just tired of being working 10 to 12 hours a day plus something extra to come later just to make extra money. And then I think the cherry cherry on the cake was the this the Peña Nieto who was a president, he won. It was a fraud but he won and he was going to be the party is going to come back and steal everything… just destroy the country again, which it happens. But I wasn't there anymore. But that was the main reason why we decided to move. Me and my wife.

M: And which part of Mexico were you in?

Ol: Mexico City

M: Okay. And that was the only motivation, sort of the main one, like what other factors that you consider?

Ol: That was the main one. I would say there are other factors that, that I know when I think back at the time, I know like one was, I think I wanted to reinvent myself. That's one thing that I couldn't be. I couldn't do it in Mexico. Another thing I would say I wanted to experience a different culture. I worked for a few months in Spain. Yeah. And I really liked it. But I also wanted to go to North America, and I don't like United States or Canada was my first option.

M: Okay, and why Canada? I mean, we I've you just said that Canada was your first option, like had you done a lot of prior research into Canada?

Ol: I did research Bunch of countries based mostly Europe, Canada, US… even and I consider the US. So it's a North America, Europe and Australia at some point, Australia too. Yeah, I checked that. And after so I'm so just to give you something Yeah, I'm a project manager. I'm an engineer, I have a software engineering degree. So, I'm very methodical person. So basically, created a huge spreadsheet with pros and cons for every country.. So, it was kinda interesting that I mean, the first thing that we consider was we need speak the language. That's one of the things that we wanted…that narrows or I mean, not a lot, but now is basically to the US, Canada, in America, the UK, I mean, Scotland and Ireland and Spain as well and Australia. was basically that in the end that those ended up being a..lets say second choice. And then after that I did all this analysis and all the immigration processes of the openness of the culture regarding immigration. And after reading all that, I realized that Okay, so it's Australia or Canada. Those are the more open cultures loving immigration. So either or so, and the main decision was well Australia’s kinda far. And so if, and it had happened, so if one of our family members of friends die, we want to be there. If we took a flight from Australia to Mexico City..it's like 27 hours. If you took a flight from Toronto to Mexico it is four hours. So that was the deal breaker.

M: So in terms of ethnic background, you and your wife both always been in Mexico?

Ol: We were born and raised in Mexico. And or families… I don’t know if it matters to you, but my family and my mom's side is from Japan. I'm fourth generation Mexican. So, my great grandfather came in then my grandfather was born in Mexico, my mom and me. So, and on my dad's side, they're from Spain, but they came two centuries ago. So that's kind of lost and my wife, so one side of her family's from Spain, and the other one is from Lebanon. But she's third, second generation in Mexico from Lebanon. So, her grandfather migrated from Lebanon to Mexico.

M: And, um, let's talk about professional background now. So, you said you work as a software engineer or project manager?

Ol: Computer Engineering is my degree, okay. I used to be a developer for a few years after high school then I moved into product management. And I did that for 10 years and now well mostly… We still pretty much it’s the same but it's a different role. It's just, like more like a client facing role, but still project management-ish.

M: Okay, so you are doing what you were doing back home. Like it's the same kind of industry, it's the same industry similar roles?

Ol: Okay, cool.

M: Um, and in terms of planning your migration like pretty much the first move How long did you spend in terms of researching and planning like in terms of time, total in total?

Ol: So, we decided to move after we got married. We got married in 2008. I think it was like end of 2009 when we decided to move here in 2013, so I’d say like, around three, four years. Doing research planning and applying learning French, all those kinds of things. So very basic mine, my wife is better, but we did learn some things. We hired a teacher for French in Mexico.

M: And that gives you more points?

Ol: Give me… I think you gave me like, three, three points for me and six to my wife.

M: And did you like did you think about particular sites of where you wanted to move? Like, were you sure that you wanted to come to Toronto for example? Okay, yeah, so not other parts of Canada.

Ol: We consider Montreal and Vancouver at some point, but our main choice was always Toronto mostly because this at the time, where we knew it was like the financial centre of Canada first. So, All the money's here. So, you want a job, mostly the jobs are paid well here. And the second one is somewhere where there was a plan to expand Ontario's technology budget to make it easier for IT companies to come in, starting in 2015, or something was 2016. So, I read that. And I remember it caught my eyes like, well, it's better to be there to have to know some people were ready when when this comes. It's going to be huge. And it's coming right now. You can see now, some bunch of technology companies opening up many branches here.

M: And in terms of your options that were available to you, so did you know that you had to go on a student visa or were there other migration options available to you You can, what kind of options Did you consider

Ol: So student visa was the last option. The first option was PR. At the time, there was no express entry. So we applied and we got invited for an interview to go to the PR. But the interview was scheduled for 27 months after we got the invitation. So, a little over two years old, we go the invite in 2012 and the interview was scheduled to be in 2014.. Yeah, it was. It was not it was not entirely the express entry. So this express entry is amazing. Back then was like you submitted all the papers. Waited we waited for almost a year to receive an answer. You get an answer and then saying, Hey, we know we like you. But again, we have received your your papers. Now you can come for an interview in 27 months. Express entry started… I think was like 2016,,, should be 2016 or maybe 20, late 2015 that it started. So all of this sort of programs like the Canadian experience class… they existed, okay, but it didn't have Express entry.. So extress entry is just the way you select applicants. But back then before Express entry, you submit something… you wait for a year, a couple years. And then at some point, you get a letter that says “Oh, thank you”. Actually for the podcast. I interviewed one lady and she said that she applied six years. Six years later, she got the invite. So like people are just kind of hoping for the best.

M: So you, you didn't want to wait for 27 months.

Ol: We didn't want to wait. And it would have been kind of we received the invitation kind of at the same time that this president won the election. So, it was like, No, we need to go somewhere else. So, I started looking for a job in my field. But it's really hard to get a job if you're not in the country. So, I never got and I got a couple of interviews, phone interviews, and when I tell them that, and say but I just need a job offer and then I'll get the permit. And they were like yeah, no. It was a little challenging. So, we tried that for a few months. And then we were working with an agency that was helping us with the immigration process. And they said, okay, you have another option. You can go as a student. One of you goes and studies a postgrad program and the other one gets automatically.. they get a work permit. So, so we decided that I was going to be the one studying. My wife didn't want to study. So I took the fall because I didn't want to sit and say I don't like school. So, it's like, Okay, I'm good. And, and we get and I think that process took us like two months. Like from the moment we apply to the college, they said, Yes, like two days. We sent all the papers; we got the work permit and the student permit in less than two months.

M: And, and that was for a University here in Toronto.

Ol: It was a college. Not university for Human Resources. It was the cheapest program that had a co-op program in the end. I think it served me well, because it certainly helped me to understand the culture, the working culture. Everything that you don't know. When you're back in Mexico, you think that everything's gonna be the same. When you come here is there's ., there’s some subtleties that you don't know until you leave. Yeah. So studying them was really good, like a cover letter. In Mexico we don’t use a cover letter. Tailoring the resume for what you’re applying for, We didn't do that in Mexico. We only use one resume, and just send it everywhere. So those little things I learned by studying that. So I think I'm so happy that I picked that thing. But that was not the reason. The main reason was to was the cheapest way to get there and the easiest way to get a job.

M: And in terms of skilled migration, like how do you mean, considering that you are already working in this skilled profession, which is, I mean, software engineering, which is, I think, considered skilled, skilled anywhere in the world. How did that that's sort of like what was the perception at the time When you were going into this course of human resources, like how did you consider that? Or how do you consider now also yourself to be skilled? I mean, the question with this with this, the study is about how do people, how do people self identify as skilled? So how do your what's your identification of skills or skills? Or being skilled?

Ol: How do I identify myself? I knew it was skilled. I knew I was sure what I was doing. I had been doing project management for software projects, for years. There was a lot of things that I didn't know, at the time. But I don't think my perception of myself is that's really what you're asking my perception of myself, I thought of myself as a skilled worker immigrant I would say. Like, I knew that I had the skills to get a good job and all that. Is that kind of question. Yeah, and I think studying here, the HR course was pretty healthy. Just to, because you know what, it's funny because I don't think it happens a lot in Latin America. And I don't know if other countries but at least in Mexico, it happens a lot that you see people from the US or Canada and you automatically assume that everybody knows more than you. Just because they come from the first world country they do they have access to better and we don't, all those kind of things when you automatically assume that they might be better than you. When I went to school, the good thing is that most most of my classmates were from from here. And I realized that no, everybody's the same. Everybody's human. Everybody has their flaws. And they don't have any. And I noticed that because to be fair, I think it was a it was part of the privileged generation. I was able to go to private schools in Mexico and really good private schools. So, all the knowledge that I have was way bigger than the knowledge that my Canadian classmates had and it's funny because there's things that I knew from Canada that they didn’t know. And we would just start talking about Mexico or another country. They were like, yeah, I have no idea, Mexico is the beach and maybe some kind of ruins but that's it. So I started realizing that my knowledge and my skills were even superior than a lot of people, but not because, not in a cocky way that yeah, I’m better than them. It's just that I think was privileged enough to have a good education. And, and another thing that I always I love, I love learning, always doing things. So, I think that part of myself helped me to understand that prejudice that I've had before was completely wrong. Not because I'm from Mexico, I know less than them. We are all humans; we are here to learn. You're not less than the other ones. It's not that I started thinking on you guys are less. Also, like, you know, speaking English, for me was like, I learned English when I was a kid. And I was like, Oh, yeah, I need to pronounce everything perfectly, or they're gonna make fun of me or no ones gonna take me serious, or I need to write everything perfectly. And then you realize that people don't really care as long as they understand you.

M: You did mention a few times about the political scene in Mexico. Are you very politically inclined? And both you and your partner?

Ol: Mostly me, I'm identifying myself as a leftist libertarian. So for me, even the Centre for me it's a little too right wing. So, but it's kind of like hypocritical because I work in a FinTech company for bank so it’s a little hypocritical. But I am. I'm very inclined to the left. Like very, very inclined to left, I wouldn’t say radical because if you think about the left, even in Latin America usually the left is associated with either guerrilla, in like Colombia, or dictatorships like Fidel Castro or Maduro right now in Venezuela. So, I don't identify with them. I'm more like a let's distribute economically I think Im more leftisit than…I think the world should be distributed equally. I'm in favor of universal global income, I'm in favor of paying a huge amount of taxes if that's going to help, I don't have kids, but if my taxes pay for my neighbour’s education I'm completely okay with that. And I'm not sick. I always been here for six years and I always and I only had to use the walk-in clinic once, never gone to the hospital but if my taxes go to the health of the people, I'm completely fine with that. So those kinds of things that would be my inclination. In Mexico the problem is that Mexico is a very conservative kind of right wing oriented country. So, anything that its center it's considered a left. So I never identified with that.

M: In terms of political inclination, like what is it here? What is it like here now? Are you involved in the politics?

Ol: A little bit…not involved. I wouldn't say I'm not politically active but I'm, I used to read a lot, news and not only here but from all over the world. I think Canada is. Canada is a very conservative country. Toronto is a bubble. Toronto is… for me it's great and that’s why I want to do the podcast in Toronto because for me Toronto is amazingly good. You have no 50% people here immigrants and and I even in my job I think Canadians are the minority. We have like six Canadians and 50 immigrants so it's a for me it's a bubble and I like the bubble. That's why I live here. But if you go outside if you go to small towns, it's completely white towns and they're really nice people and then might not discriminate you but they are the ones who got Doug Ford into power. They are the ones who are going to be voting conservative this time. So, it's a it's a polite, it's an open society, but still a conservative society. If you think about it, getting divorced here, you need to, I think be separated for a year or may prove that there's some kind of physical violence. And when you think about the most progressive country even in Mexico, you can get divorce because its like I don't want to be married with this guy anymore. It’s like okay fine sign this and you’re divorced. That's it. So, this kind of things actually made me think.. like even with Europe. Like one of the more progressive countries like Spain, it's kind, its way behind.

M: If applicable, which it is in your case. So tell me about all the visa categories you went through from the point of your initial arrival to your current status. And we will include wait times, processing times and any bridging visas or bridging so in Australia, it's bridging visas, but here I don't think that's applicable. We do have a bridge Oh, you have actually applied for that as well. Alright. So that's, that's kind of the show.

Ol: Let's start from where from here. I have nothing. So, let's say I was here it was in Mexico. And then right now I have a PR in Canada. Okay. So what I did, I started here. So at the beginning based I told you we were doing with an agency in Mexico. So, they suggested to apply for the PR as a skilled worker. So that I would say that happened here. She was like a PR application, and was skilled worker was. Oh, that's another thing and right now you have the express entry and depending on your points, you apply for something. Back then you needed to apply to something in particular. Either you applied for a Canadian experience PR or skilled worker PR. So, you had to pick one. So, we applied for skilled worker. We, when we didn't apply, we were submitting all the papers and or the agency something changed then. This was the, this was December 2009. Okay. Something happened. I don't remember what, but something changed for the next year. So starting in January, there's something changing. We didn't have all the requirements and papers and all that. So we basically discarded this. And then we went just like Okay, now let's apply for PR, but it was for Provincial Nominee. That one was for Quebec. This is the time when we started learning French right, and this happened. I think we did. It was early like January or February when I say February 2010. We applied for this, started learning French and all that, but they told us was like, it's gonna take a while. And when when you get it, you're gonna be, you're gonna have to submit your French tests and all that. So, you have like a year for you to learn French. Because I told you, it used to take a long time to get an invitation and then we just waited. And I don't know, let me check, we were right here in 2013. So, it was 2012 it was the summer of 2012. Yeah. So on the summer of 2012 was let's say, July. So yeah, it took two years. We received the invitation for the interview. And, and this was related to this one [Quebec provincial nomination], but the promise that the interview was going to happen in 2014. So we said like, No, we don't want to do that. And so we asked for options. And he said NAFTA. NAFTA is an option. So we started looking into NAFTA, when there was some North American Free Trade Agreement. So, the problem with this I mentioned is that getting a job from outside the country will be hard. So, this didn't work. Then, it was, was that was our issue I want. No, I'm mixing dates. This happened in 2011. Yes, 20 11 and this was going to happen in 2013 because it was not July was like almost like the end of the year, like October so October 2011 is when we received the letter, then we thought about the NAFTA. And I started looking for a job back then. And I think it took me like six to eight months or something to realize that I was not going to get a job and I was applying it was. But it was the problem with this I was applying the same way would apply in Mexico. just reading it and sending it so didn't work. So then in Well, this actually happened in 2011 and 2012 is when this guy the president won. So this one we said like you know what, we can't we can't stay here. So we applied for the student visa. Well, we started considering, we didn't apply yet. We started considering. So we started considering this, but then I got a I got a I got assigned to a project in Spain. So, I moved to Spain. The original idea was to move in September here. So we're thinking about planning for September. But then this is a great opportunity. It was $9 million project. So, it wasn't really great on the rest of the international experience. It was moving to Spain, I was going to work for the UK. So basically travel between Spain UK for a few months. So I thought it was going to be quite cool, its gonna look great on my resume. So, I cannot. I mean, we can. It's gonna be a six month project. So we can feel we can do this later. We can we can apply for for coming in January or that so we kinda waited. And then we started applying for student visa in October but then I was in Spain so we didn't have all the documents. So, we gave up and decided to apply for April. So, this is what happened. So in April. So, so we started thinking about this we ended up flying formally in well, we actually applied in October 2012. But then we delayed it onto the the summer semester. So I was in Spain from September to December. And then I went back to Mexico and it was kind of crazy because we didn't finish the project. I was working in Mexico but we Spain's timezone. I was waking up at one in the morning started working at two in the morning oh wow and by noon it was done but it was super tired yeah but at the to the story so um so we applied back we applied then we asked the college to not to apply for the winter semester we applied for summer semester and on April 29 2013 we arrived together and this was I had a student permit and my wife had a work permit. So a year past and after a year I got the so it was kind of the same, let's say April 2014. I got my work permit. At the time I got a job. Not this one I got another job that was like a super crappy job with super entry level, really bad job. That was on HR because we have we had in the program, in the HR program, we had a co-op semester, and I got a co-op position in that place. And after the four months as you're like, Hey, we want to keep you they offered me like your shitty salary. And the job was really bad. But I felt at the time I didn't have any options so I was like Yeah, I need to get a job. And also not because I didn't have any options as a person, but because I needed to start building my Canadian experience, because you needed I think, two years to apply for that because back then it was still this program that I was telling you. So when I needed to work for two years in Canada to apply as a permanent residence. So that's why I accepted. But then that worked till 2014 and then 2014 then in 2015 again around the same time in 2015 my work permit expired which was only one year, they only give you the same amount if you work for less than leave us to study for less than two years. They give you a work permit for the exact amount of time they work. But if you study more than that, they give you three years. But I only studied one year so I only had one. Yeah, here is when I applied for the NATFA. And because we already had a job in this company and for the NAFTA, you have to be you have to be working in certain professions. Not all professions can for the NAFTA. But technology is one. So if I hadn't stayed in the other job, I wouldn't be able to apply for the NAFTA. So then I got my NAFTA work permit for another year. Was in one year of two years? Okay, so we got 2018 we got the university in 2017. So, this was two years, so I got it in. Yeah 2015. I had to renew it at some point because it was you had to renew it every year. But I got this one on to like for two years. So you have to renew it. And then starting on early 2017, let's say February. I started applying for the PR. The first time that I applied by myself, I got denied and I got the denial around my birthday so it was May. It's kind of ridiculous when I was submitted all the papers I forgot to upload the translation of our marriage certificate and instead of the saying hey you're missing the translation, Can you send it back? They actually denied and declined the whole application. Yeah, and that's that's when I say that society might be open but you have some people that are still not because one of my friends forgot to upload their passport, which is even worse than the marriage certificate and they came back like hey, we're missing this documents. Could you please upload them? He did and it went smoothly. In my case they just did this. I was really upset. I called them and nobody cared. Yeah, and actually they told me that it's totally depends on the person who's reviewing your profile.

M: Can you not appeal it?

Ol: I could. Okay, but I do have time because the thing is with the work permit, that you cannot be more than three years with a work permit… temporary work permit. You either go back to a country or you become a permanent residency, right? And if you count this work permit was two years of NAFTA, I didn't have any choice. And the good thing is that the company where I'm still at the they really liked me and they valued me so they hired a lawyer and the lawyer reapplied for the PR and we did this process right after I got to do now which was around my birthday, so say May 2017. We apply for the PR. This time, the lawyers did everything. And nothing was missed. But it's so expensive that if it wasn't the company, I wouldn't be able to pay. I think the bill ended up being like $12,000. And they paid for it, I wouldn't be able to pay for that. So I'm really I'm really thankful. I'm really grateful for them. They couldn't sponsor me because there was some restrictions. And the lawyer basically analyzed everything. And they said, this is the best approach. They did it. And it actually worked because on September 2017 we got our PR. So, you see, it's like, what, like five months or four months. And so, we got all the papers and everything. So, the only thing we needed to do was to go out of the country and return as a landed immigrant, which we did in October. We actually, we celebrate, we took a two week trip to the UK. We toured a lot of places over there. And when we came back, we landed as immigrants in October 2017. I think you can, if you don't want to go out of the country, you can schedule an interview with some government agency. And then you can just go there and they do all the paperwork for you, but it's faster if you go out and come back. Most of my friends that I have a flight like that. Most of them have… they drive to Buffalo, and they come back. I mean, you still need to use lead someone to actually see that you're actually the person who’s arriving? And I think the airports and the borders of they already have an infrastructure. So why spend more money having an office? If someone can just like in the end, I think the way they see it is, you're the one who's going to be wanting the permanent residency. So if you cannot go out of the country come back then...its your problem. I think it's efficient. And I think it's saving overheads. And this happens like all the work permits, they just arrive by mail. But the PR, it's different, like some kind of a ceremonial system. For us it was great because we arrived late at night. I think we are flight landed at maybe two in the morning. So, the immigration office at Pearson was empty. So, it took us like five minutes to get the PR card so well they print the cards. So you can well I guess they take a picture of their So did they take the picture there? No, they use the picture that you submitted. So actually, they could print them and mail them to you. But anyway, thats the process. You need to go out and come back.

M: Okay, now, I'm going to move on to Yeah, so that's that that's with regards to the sort of timeline and visa categories right. And that's everything will go to the commercial services and things about commercial services you used in your migration journeys, the things that you paid for. So agents, lawyers, which I know that your company paid for in this case. But other things as well. So, education that you paid for career consultants that you may have paid for document translation, skills assessment anything throughout this whole journey that you paid

Ol: First we paid in Mexico for another lawyer which was the one who was helping us to do this because when we started we know nothing knew nothing so so we paid for a lawyer here we had to pay for translations of all the documents in the beginning. We had to pay for a lot of translations because every time you apply, they need IELTS, you need to pay for someone to assess and I think I had to pay now that I'm going to be applying for the citizen I think I need to do the exam again. Anyway, I applied here, then. So, we applied here. We did the IELTS here for English language, then we around here. It was right before we got the invite thing we started we applied…We presented our I don't remember names for French, French language, French and English. We pay for those. We got here we paid for the college program. It's like three times more than what a resident or citizen would pay - 17K. So it was the cheapest one. But my friends from from here they were paying like four or 5000 so I paid for that. Then I think every time that we applied, I had to have to pay for something it was like for the PR was worse because then you need to get your criminal record check. You need to get your criminal records from your home country as well. You need to get everything translated like everything marriage certificates. All that. What else?...because at the time you had to be for a visa as Mexican, you have to apply for a visa for to enter Canada, so you have to apply for that as well. Yeah, we have to do a health assessment for the PR only. That was only for PR. What else? There were three language tests because they expire in 2 years and I have to do a fourth one now for the citizenship. Because according to but according to the government, you forget the language in two years, I guess. I don't know. But we did pay for the place to live. What else, what else,

M: So if you remember later on that stuff that you've paid for so so we can move on. Yeah. Okay. Um, so tell me about the role of technology in your migration journey from the initial arrival stage to now. So, what I'm trying to, I suppose here is how did you conduct online research if you were doing and what sort of resources did you use if you want to put them on your map? Social media avenues, or any sort of other online assistance in your migration journey?

Ol: Most of the research done if not all, was done online. I'm very… I mean I am a software engineer, so I'm very comfortable doing that. So, at the in the beginning, my main was like, Google search And I used to check a lot of blog posts, blogs that talk like people. I think I noticed that when people move here, they're so excited. And they want to share their experience. So, they start writing the blog. But then after three posts, they never write anything else. But at least you have the beginning. So, you have something. Social media. Facebook, I would say, Mostly because there's a lot of newcomers to Canada group. So, Mexicans in Toronto, those kinds of things that are completely useless but I checked them. There's there was a blog that was written by... It was from Latin America, maybe Colombian and it was in Spanish then they explained the shock that they got when they went to the grocery store like prices and they were looking for bananas is like there's no banana, because it is winter. And for me, it was like, Where am I going? Then you get here and you realize it doesn't matter if it's winter, you get bananas because globalization, but I just for me at the time, that was shocking because like, where am I going like, if I want to eat pineapples, you cannot eat that unless it's summer, which is a complete lie. So, but maybe they…. maybe they weren't living in Toronto, maybe they were living in one of those small towns that I was mentioning. But for me it was kind of shocking. So, it actually gave me some ideas on what to expect. That I think was a good thing because when I got here, the culture shock for me was almost minimal. It was almost nothing. Because I already did a lot of research. I used to work with a lot of people from the US so for me, it was not a huge deal. and I like the cold. So, I was okay. For my wife it was a little bit different. But regarding social media, I think the main reason why I think they're useless and mostly when when some blog posts it's a little different because it's someone who actually wants to share their experience, when they take the time to write some social media its mostly someone who knows nothing. x asks a question, and everybody answers whatever they think it's the right answer. So, it's like one person saying, Hey, I'm going to.. okay, remember that one. Someone said Hey, I'm moving to Toronto and I don't want to buy a car. How much should I save for, for public transit? How expensive it is. And to be honest, if you just Google Toronto Public transit, you see the first but someone asked that. And then there are little things like you're going to spend like $300 a month and then someone else is like you can buy a pass it is going to be 100 bucks. And the thing is that because there's so many answers, and most of them are wrong, that just confuse you. So, I gave up with social media, I think at this stage, and most of the most of the research I did after was either blogs that I considered more serious, or immigration lawyers websites. I saw that that that was a lot lawyers, websites. There was a lot of information there. And podcasts, And one of the things I like about the podcast is that I think I only found one that was talking about Canada, Most of them were talking about the the US or Europe. And I found it was people talking about their their experiences, but it was kind of interesting to learn how the shocks that they were Facing. So that happened way before we got here. So we did all the research. And good, I would say most of the research was done. And also the CIC website. The Canadian immigration one - That one I think I checked in every day like anything that happened is checking. And news from the global mail. I subscribed to the global mail for a bit in Mexico, just to learn a little bit of a culture and stuff like that.

M: And I want you to think of social media, I mean, technology not in terms of researching but also the role of technology in your life as an immigrant broadly. What is what is some some technology that you use or continue to use or have used? Is there any sort of significant technological

Ol: Mostly my phone. The smartphone is because any question you have, it's just. Google Maps is amazing because you when you get to see that you need to know where you're at. Okay, Google Maps helps you. But the thing about the phone right now is that it's a small computer, you can just make phone calls with it. But I would say the most important thing between my laptop and my phone, I think those saved my life when I got here. Even for because I came as a student, I needed to take notes, work, something is just my computer. But in the day to day, it was mostly my phone and like, have a Google Maps. Anything I wanted to check was just there.

M: Here what you said immigration lawyers, websites and blogs. Do you remember particular examples of these? any websites that come to mind or you don't?

Ol: The guys who actually did my process over here, that's Greenland's bgl. I check their website but I, at the time I found them like a little too poshy. It ended up I mean, they're super expensive. I remember these guys because it shocked me the the cost at the time. There was another one. But it was around when I was in Spain. So, it was around this time here. Around this time, I found it when I was in Spain, and I found it and I remember it was so good that I sent a link to my wife. It was great. It was a Lawyer, but he had a blog in there. And every, every week or every two weeks he posted something about Canada. Canadavisa.com. Okay, so I guess it Yeah, it's kind of famous. Yeah, I remember I saw it when I found in Spain because I had nothing to do with my wife state and Mexico. She was like, Yeah, I was doing research.

M: Tell me about the role of your social connections on your maps or friends, family, greater community, professional networks, anything significant that you'd like to put on your map in how they affected your migration from the initial stage to where you are now.

Ol: My family in Mexico. It was about my mom and my sister and my dad a little bit. But mostly when I talk about my family, its my mom and sister. I don't think I ever hesitated coming here because of them but it affected me because we're really close. So just one example we used to go to do have a coffee every week, like my mom after work, and then my sister arrived and then I arrived and it was like a ritual every week. Those little things affected me. And it was over here like Around this time, she was like my family. And I have a group of friends that we've been friends since University and we used to play video games together and play dungeons and dragons together, like nerdy stuff. But we used to do it every week, every Thursday. So that was one of the things one of those rituals that you know you're not gonna have even when I moved here when we when we moved over here. So when we moved here I started to keep the show my d&d group these guys we started playing Dungeons and Dragons online. So they met in one of them's house and they just put a computer with my face there. It was fun, and I think is one of the things that I needed to still feel that I was in. Yeah, one of the good things is that I'm, I'm a very social person, but I really, really enjoy time with myself. So the first month when we got from April 29 to early June, I didn't have a phone. So, my birthday is in May 26. So, nobody called me on my birthday because there was no phone to call me. And I really enjoyed that month of having no connection with the world. I really enjoyed it. I don't know if I would do it again. But I really enjoyed it. So, focusing on another thing I was starting school was But anyway, those kind of things. One of the things I think helped me a lot is when I started when I started school at George Brown. People here were really friendly. There was like half immigrants, half non-immigrants. And and, and we started hanging out from time to time and all the things that I was way older than most of them. So those things as like, hey, let's go clubbing and I was like no Im not doing that. So those kind of things played a huge role. And another thing when I got here I one of my ideas of one of the things I wanted to do was to blend into the pot, I need to blend into the Canadian culture. So, I remember I was telling my wife that I'm not gonna talk to anyone who speaks Spanish. You're the only one and just because we're married but I actually avoided Spanish speaking people because I wanted to, to improve my language. That was the main reason because I thought if I start hanging out with Mexicans, then I'm never going to be speaking English so how can I improve. How am I gonna get there? How am I gonna get the job. How am I gonna give it all back?. So, I avoided that. So my wife started, my wife was a little different. And she wanted to have some connection with the Mexicans society and the culture. So, she started hanging out with them. So most of the time I spent with the only people were talking Spanish with was my wife and my friends from here and my mom and my sister. Here I tried not to and it took me maybe a year to start realizing that I was being an idiot, so I started just hanging out. Now I don't care. The time it was my my idea was like, I need to do this because I when I moved I was 35 is like, boy, I'm already 35 I need to get a job, I need to to make things work for me right now. Because if not, I'm going to be 40 and then I'm going to still be in a shitty job. That was my idea at the time.

M: Tell me about the role of so in terms of giving you we discussed families as well and regulatory aspects of your migration. So government requirements that you had to fulfill. So this includes police checks, characters, points, test health requirements, immigration forums, any significant aspects of this or any challenges of this part. Then you remember what to put on your map?

Ol: The main challenge that I got was when I had to get stuff from Mexico. Yeah, like it was for the PR. It was it was actually around this time after we got approved. There was a lot of stuff that we had to get from Mexico like, criminal record so bad. It's a pain because you either had to fly there and do it yourself or fill out bunch of papers to do it. And I'm completely forgetting something here, between the NAFTA and the PR. I got a bridge permit. Bridge corporate. So what happened is that my NAFTA was, was going to be expiring in May or something or April or May because every year, and but so we need a bridge work permit. So we apply I applied, actually the company did it because it was around here. So between this, they only need to say you need to apply for the PR, and you need to submit the documentation to reapply it and you get a bridge work permit. So I applied for that. It was kind of optional. But because there's another thing that's called implied status, I don't know if you've heard about now. So if your Work Permit expires, but you're already applied for the permanent residency you're legally working in living in Canada. But and it's but you cannot leave and come back you need to stay in Canada. But in this case, the one that I applied to the bridge, it's a permit that allows you to go back and forth. They need to travel. So I couldn't stay here because because work I need to go back and forth. But I have friends that they weren't able to go. They didn't apply for this because it costs money right? And when you're in my case, didn't matter because my company was paying for everything. But it costs more money and you're an immigrant usually are counting every penny so I have friends that didn't apply for this. They waited for a few months between their work permit expired all that and they couldn't leave the country. Actually here's a sad story. One guy that I know his father died and he couldn't go back to Mexico. If you leave, you need to wait outside the country to a resolution. it has it's flawless. Its getting better I think with the express entry and all that's getting way better. It's faster. Like if you think about it in 2010 or 2011 we applied, and it took us almost two years to get an invite for an interview two years from then. And if you think about it, I got the approval in four months with express entry. So, there's improvement. Express Entry started I think it was don't quote me on this but I think it started around here is when express interest started.

M: in terms of challenges and obstacles, if there's anything else you think of please put that put that on there as well. But if that's kind of it, then

Ol: I think, honestly, I think my path to get the PR was very smooth. Because even though I had to go and go through all this work permits, I always had support from either my wife because she was making the money to pay for things, or the company. They didn’t sponsor me but they paid for lawyer. So in this sense, I would say I was very lucky. But because there's people that I think our issue was when wanted to go to leave Mexico as quickly as possible. That’s why we actually went through all this. If we didn't, we were like, okay, we'll stay in Mexico for a couple more years, then we would just get the invite for the PR, and then we just come in. And that's it. Yeah, we wanted to leave quickly. So we went through, I don't know how many work permits. So, the student permit, then the work permit. Then my two NAFTA permits, my bridge work permit, then my denial of the PR and then the PR. So I think I went through all the permits available. Laughs. But I mean, I suppose that the benefit of getting out of Mexico like and I would do it again.. For us was more important to leave the country than to do all this. I mean it’s a pain. Every time that you need to apply for a new work permit its like let me resurface all the documents that I sent last time. You need to keep track of every trip that you did. I used to travel a lot for work. So, it is a pain. I tried to avoid going back to Mexico. Mostly because… there's two things. Firstly, I hate spending my vacation in Mexico, because if I spend money and time and vacation days I want to go somewhere new. And second, it's very stressful to go to Mexico so well, family My family is very close. Not my close family but my extended family - like my aunt's my uncle's, my cousins, and my wife's family like we get there and everybody wants to see which is super nice. It's really nice. I really love that, my friends is that where are you coming? Let's grab a coffee let's grab a beer. But that means that every day for as long as you're there, you have something to do. You have breakfast with someone, lunch with another person, dinner with another person, drinks with another one, coffee with another one. And then you met like five or six people on a day. And you get home and we should because one time we tried to stay at a hotel. And my mom was like, she felt that we dont want to stay with her. And we ended up cancelling the hotel and staying with our families. And that's the thing like you have to be with them. So, there's no time. There's no time to relax. Yeah, so that's the stressful part. Also, Mexico is growing violent. It was violent. It was it was the crime rate was really high when I left. Now, it's worse. So maybe It's the same amount crimes the problem is that there are harder crimes. Like before you someone like I got, I was mugged five times in Mexico City which is normal. I don't like I don't know anyone that lives in Mexico that hasn't been mugged or something. That’s normal. The problem is that when that happened I was younger and all that, they beat me a couple of times to take my wallet. Now people have started killing people to take their wallet or their watch or the car so I don't want to get killed because I'm driving a car. So those kind of things. And, and even before we started this, I was talking to one of my friends and he said he's a professor of one of the public universities in Mexico. And he was telling me like he was in the public transit to one of the one of the campuses, which is in one of the poorest parts of Mexico City, and someone can came, went into the bus with a gun and basically said, Hey, everybody give me what do you have. It's one of the poorest neighborhoods in Mexico City. How much money are they going to have? So, my friend just gave them their phone. And it said that it's criminals taking money out of the poor. And that didn't happen before. It was usually the crime didn't happen in poor areas, because the poor don't have, they don't have anything. So why would you not them? Now it's getting there. And now you see if you open a newspaper from Mexico, every day you have people killed somewhere at a party at a restaurant. So, going back for me and just living that it's kind of stressful.

M: So how do you feel then in How's your family being there? Will you will you eventually like like, will your family migrate here as well? Now that you hope to Yeah, you want to

Ol: My mom wants to come here when she retires. My sister, she's a writer. She's a freelancer so she can move anytime. And I don't know if they're going to do it. But it would be great. Yeah, I tell them. They're welcome. They told them like, you're welcome my home for not forever. But because it's a one bedroom. But at least you can stay here for a few months, and then we'll find something for you. And they know that. Anything I can do?, I’ll do it. I can support them with money or something. I'll do it. Yeah. I think it's more on my mom. I don't see it. I think her only concern right now is she loves her job as a teacher. And she loves her and she doesn’t speak English very well so she wouldn't be able to be a teacher here. Yes, a very good she she's in university. In actually the same in Brazil, my friend is works and she's a teacher there. And they just opened the Arts program and my mom is a writer and a painter. So, she's one of the ones that's opening the program and all that so, and for my mom, her professional career has always been very important. So, I think she would be quite dissatisfied if she did. I think she needs to complete her cycle. At some point. She's gonna say like, I'm done with university and moving here, but I need to wait for that. I can sponsor my mom, I cannot sponsor my sister. The only way that I could have sponsored, it’s another thing that I that's what I'm thinking that the Canadian cultures sometimes very conservative. The only way I can sponsor My sister is if I'm single, my sister single and our parents Dead.

M: And what about your wife's family? Does she want to bring her family over?

Ol: She would love to. She would love to as well. That's I think that's if my family's hard. Their family would be harder.

M: All right, great. And I suppose now at any point if you use any support services, so and I'm talking about NGOs or welfare services or community organizations of religious organizations, were you ever involved with anything like that during your migration journey?

Ol: No, no, I'm an atheist as a good leftist. So, I never then there was never involved in a religious organization, not NGOs. The only thing I did is when back so just 14 I started working here. So, I got this job at horizon where I'm working at. I started on March 2014, 2015. Yeah, I've been there, four and a half years. So, March 2015, I started working here, and I got fired from my other job, the HR HR job, I got fired on December 2014. So, between January, February, and half of March, I was under the Employment Insurance Program. Basically if you’re fired without cause there's a layoff or something like that. You can apply and They support you with certain amount. It's a percentage of what you're earning before up to a certain limit. Here's great because it actually, if I didn't have this, this is one of the things this is what I was telling you about taxes and if I hadn't had this, I think would be in Mexico right now. Because we were struggling. We were living on savings like be even even though my wife got a job look like it was a really bad job. Not a bad job was like an entry level job. Almost minimum wage. We had savings and and all that. Toronto is really expensive and you compare it any city in the world, but if you convert to Mexico, it's usually expensive, like back in Mexico. I had a two bedroom apartment and it was paying about, if you converted to Canadian dollars maybe like $400 in a really nice. When we got here we got a one bedroom in downtown for 1600 so it was four times and because that's that's one struggle that we had actually when we got here and actually I think I should mention when we got here we didn't know we didn't know anyone. So, when you apply for to be to rent, place they want you to get a warrant or because you don't have any credit score, any credit history anything. And because we didn't cover until we have to give six months, six months, six months rent. That's a significant amount of money. It was huge for us. It ate not half but about 30-40% percent of our savings. You get it back but promise that you you paid the deposit for. So you get the deposit here. And then this is a year, right? So, in theory, it's six months, right? But you need to create month one, month two, month three, month four, month five, and then the deposit starts counting here. So, you need to pay for six months and then keep paying the rent for the next six months. So, in the lapse of six months, you spent what you would be spending in a whole year. So, and that that sucks. Right now, one of my friends just moved here from his from he was living in Boston. And he was he just moved here, and they were asking you for four months in advance. So, I told him Don't do that. I'll be you want to just please don't destroy the apartment so spoke to me. But I helped him because it's ridiculous when you're moving from a country that it's not this expensive it just it just hurts. It hurts you really bad. We found an option with Scotiabank. Scotiabank has a huge presence in Latin America. So they had an option called smart drivers, it was some program. If you open an account in Mexico, you could move all your money without paying any fees or anything. So what we did we open an account in Scotiabank, Mexico, we just move all our money there. And then the week before we moved here, we just move all the money here. So we didn't pay any fees. That was great. That was one of those great things because if not, then we were basically screwed. That's another thing when I said that its conservative and, you know, elitist. Yeah, because you asking like, okay, you want to move here first, you get points because you have a university degree, you get points because you have experience working, you get points because you all that stuff, you come here to do this thing, you're young, and you need to have money to do this kind of things and all that. So that leaves most of the people who actually need to leave their countries behind. So, I was fortunate enough to have savings, to have a degree to have experience all that, that I was a good candidate for Canada. But if you live in Mexico and you're not by you know, you weren't able to go to school, you weren't able to go to private school and you don't have a good job, you’re screwed.

M: Now, what are the sort of next steps for you future? What are you going to do now? Like next steps in terms of migration next steps in terms of life course as well? Like, what are you looking forward to?

Ol: next steps like a generic next step like life, professional life, profession, and migration. Yes, I'm trying to apply in January for citizenship. And the reason is because in October, we it's two years. I'm pretty sure you know this, but if you were temporary residents before, you're going to remember, isn't it? You can get like a bonus one year from before. So it's one year from before plus two years and permanent residency. And the idea for me and my wife would be, so this up to so in January 2020 we want to apply for citizenship. So that's the migration thing. After that, I might stay here. I want to stay here. I would like to run every like the city. I really like the quality of life. But then again, it goes to who just saying like you. I love living in downtown, because it's super convenient. But so expensive. It says like, the problem with that is that it goes with what we were saying is that you need a, really, really good job which pays a shit ton of money. So it just goes around with I was saying like, if you have money then you get the best of the city, which I'm fortunate enough to have right now. I just think I've been really lucky with my path here. The job that I got the company I'm with when I joined over less than 20 people. Now we're like 60, and I was able to grow with the company. So, I started as a product manager. Now I'm a senior director. So I mean, I think that's, I was really, really lucky to get that. So that gives me the opportunity to live here to earn enough money to to enjoy Toronto. If you don't have any money, don’t have a good job, you have to live somewhere far like Scarborough and you need to take the Go train in the morning and you need to get here and youre commute is like an hour and a half. Know that. So those kind of things is it just goes back to what I'm saying about it's a really embracing culture in the lab, but it's still very elitist. You need money, you need studies, you need to be young, you need to be a certain type of person to actually enjoy the city. I never wanted kids. So this is now. So, as I said, January 2020, is citizenship. We're planning to buy a home maybe this year hopefully. We've been saving through to for example payment. Again, we want to live in downtown so it's even more expensive than I think so we're looking into I think, because we want at least a one bedroom apartment were you talking about like over half a million dollars so so I saw one that I loved was a two bedroom plus den, two bathrooms was a $1 million plus den. You know what, like the you know, like, for example this in my apartment is you enter here. This is the kitchen. Yeah. And we have a sink here and it's open and then you have kind of like the living room/dining room. And then we have a door here and then we have the bedroom and here is the washer. A den is basically a space where it's open. There's no door. And you can use it as a small office or guest room but it has no door. Okay? That's the definition. It's like, Yeah, yeah, it's gonna be mostly for us. So we're gonna be like a small office. Oh, that's what we're looking looking into it so we want to buy a condo. I wanted to be one bedroom, plus den. That's that's my idea. As I said downtown. That's something that I think we have enough money to for the down payment and start something that Let's see, this is really expensive. Professionally, I like my job. So I'm pretty sure I'm gonna stay there for a while. So I would say by professionally, there's no change. No change. But I'm doing side projects. So that's one of the things that have been missing. I started the podcast, yeah. And then continue with that. My goal is to interview 100 immigrants. Maybe after 100 I give up or not, but that's the goal. It's in two years. I wanted to meet 100 people. And I'm also writing. One of my short stories is going to be published soon. It's It's it's a parody of an immigrant from Mexico. So his name is Jesus because it makes it it's a very common name, but it's spelled Jesus. So, people make fun of his name because they know your name is Jesus in, in an Anglophone country, nobody's going to be named never gonna name the baby Jesus. Jesus is very company. He needs to explain love of Mexico that and then he is getting a job interview for an entry level job, but he's very stubborn and arrogant. So he doesn't want to get an entry level job. He thinks that he's the Big Shot. He's been a year without a job because he's looking for the top. Like, he's gonna He's going for the major leagues, but he doesn't have the skills and nobody wants to hire him. And then he gets divorced. It’s a take a very dark humour. Its being published by the immigrant writers association. So actually, if you listen to my first episode of podcast, I don't know if you listen to you listen to the first one. The first one, I interviewed the founder of that. So it's funny because I started it just from college, I started taking a vacation program in creative writing. And I started writing that as, as part of the, of the school project. And at some point, I became a member of this association and they launched, they were asking for people to submit their stories for because they want to, they wanted to create the first anthology and it was going to be stories about immigration. Like I already have this. I just need to polish it and send it so I worked with some of my friends from school, polished it and sent it. They liked it. And it's gonna be one of 10 chapters in the book. I started writing of a young age, but I never pursue writing as a career. My mom is a writer, my sisters writer. So for me was just like, normal. I also take, I am like an amateur photographer as well. So, I do a lot of those kind of things. So yeah, that's, that's another thing. I'm going to continue pursuing my writing right now. Right now I'm writing a novel as well. So, I'm going to say novel. Yeah. Most of my short stories are like that. And like, I try to make people laugh, but my novel is a sci fi action dystopian novel. So it's a little different.

M: would you consider migration elsewhere?

Ol: I could, um, yeah, absolutely. I just would do it a little different. I would. I would be, I guess, I guess the difference right now. I wouldn't be escaping from my country. So if I consider something now, I would think a little more and maybe don't go the way I came like, I left everything and lets see what life gives us here. I think if I move somewhere else I would be a little more careful and be like okay I need a job I'm going to go get a job and it has to be something that is really is fulfilling not like the first job I have something that's fulfilling and but I would consider I would completely consider moving and there's places that I would love to move. Mostly Europe, Europe, mostly UK. I would love to live in the UK. London To be honest, is my favorite city in the world. So that I haven't been so yeah, I would imagine it would be great. I've been there so many times. So many like three before four times. But it's still like you think about me like I I don't come from I my family's not wealthy. That also made the first time I left Mexico. I was 27-28 I never left my country and there was 28 years old.

M: And where did you go

Ol: Cuba.And then the next time I left was when I was I got married to my wife. And no, no, before we got married, we wanted to cruise to the Caribbean. So, the second time, and then we got more many more here and then I started traveling a lot. But what I'm trying to say is that traveling is are quite expensive. So I never did it when I was young. I never, I always dreamed about we're going to grab a backpack, I'm going to tour Europe with a bag, but I never did that. So now when I travel, I travel with a backpack but it's different because it's now because I know that I have a job that I'm coming back to a job at the time. It's like I'm just gonna grab a backpack in travel the whole whole Europe and maybe Asia for for a year and see what happens but never never did it. Yeah, but yeah, I would consider migrating but it just would be a little more. I wouldn't say careful because I think it was careful with me here. I think it would be more picky in the sense that it has to be a place that I really want to go, and I need to get a job I really want. And that's like kind of like I actually got a job offer a few months ago for the US, California, And I said no. Two things first, I didn't I didn't want I don't want to leave before I get my citizenship and also in the United States, and it's not a good time to be Mexican in the United States, even though I don't have Mexican. And my accent is, I have an accent but its not that Mexican-ish. So I will be okay. And it's California. I completely get it. But still the US. I don't want to live in a country where you have Trump as president.

M: I mean, if you if you have nothing else to add, but I suppose I have I always have this final question when people draw a map. How do you feel looking at all of this now?

Ol: Well, first I feel…I feel like really happy. I never I mean, I knew I did all this. I knew I applied to all this things. But I'm, its the first time I put it in somewhere and I can see it. It's like, there's so many steps that I did to get where I am now. So yeah, it's like, Wow. I remember it was it was it was very stressful. Every time that my I think the most stressful times was when I lost my job. And I knew I needed to get a job by June, or may or the summer because my work permit was expired. And I needed to get a job in my field to apply for the NAFTA extension. That was so stressful. And now that I look back I was like, I was like I feel like, it's it's a strange feeling because it's physically like I want to cry because I remember those times I remember how stressful it was but also I remember the time when we got here. And we had we didn't have any furniture and we were sleeping in an inflatable mattress because we were waiting for the furniture to arrive. And like just a feeling of a fresh start was so invigorating. If you look at the picture of me when I arrived, and a picture of me two months before in Mexico City, I look like five years older in the in the in the picture from Mexico City. Like I think the stress in Mexico. You know Everything just made me look way older. Oh my god, I felt so renewed and all that. And I remember thinking, it's like nobody knows who I am here. I can be whoever I want. I have no baggage. I can do anything I want. Yep. And that's feeling I think it was. I think only someone that's actually gone through the migration process knows what it feels like. To look at this and that kind of reminds me this time when we started deciding because which we actually the reason we we started thinking about moving was because I had a company in Mexico we went bankrupt, lost everything so it was like shit, I need something I need a fresh start. So it's kind of tired of the whole thing. So it's just looking at this is just has been quite a journey. Has it been worth it? Yeah. So I mean, that's that that's that's the thing, right that happy at the end of it. So that's good. And yeah, um, look, I mean, I, I don't really have any more questions, you've pretty much covered everything but is there anything that you you think I should have asked that I didn't ask? I suppose the one thing that I do maybe want to talk about, is you providing advice. Do you give migration advice to people? I suppose through your podcast, that's one avenue that you do. I kind of do through podcast but I just started with this good podcast. Before, I'm usually very open to anyone who like for example, someone contacts me through LinkedIn. I always reply and say like, Hey, can we have a coffee? Can you tell me? I just thought I was them at some point. So I know. I know the struggle. I know the desperation that you feel that this is not going the way I wanted it to go. So, Yeah, I'm always open to that. And that's the reason why I started the podcast. Because I wanted to give something back to. I would, I would. I think what I want to say is like, I would want to give back what I would like to have would have liked to have back then when I started the migration process. Like someone, and that's what I'm focusing on the stories of normal people's like, everybody's struggling. You're not the only one with the issues. Yeah, everybody has issues.