

# “Sub-wage” Artist to Subway Boss

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**(Publisher’s note:** *The following is the REAL story of the Dhillons. We would like to thank both Jagdeep and Amandeep for allowing VIRCS to reveal their struggle and success and publish this story).*

Jagdeep Dhillon left a rewarding management position in his country to start a new life in Canada with his wife, Amandeep –a teacher and vice principal of an elementary school, and 4-year-old child. They arrived in the country full of hope, but the gulf between their high expectations and harsh reality soon became apparent. Alone, unemployed, and living in a dingy basement suite, the young couple found life difficult in Victoria. A member of their community suggested that they could find help from the Employment Transitions & Coaching Program at the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society.

Their case manager immediately introduced Jagdeep to the employer of a Subway sandwich shop. He was hired right away, but unbeknownst to the case manager, the employer interpreted a BC labour law that allowed him to pay \$6.00 per hour to new workers. Since Jagdeep had no Canadian work experience, the employer felt that Jagdeep fell into that wage category. As a newcomer, Jagdeep had no clue about the legislation.

Upon checking on Jagdeep’s work progress a few days later, his case manager discovered the employer’s subjective interpretation of the law and immediately intervened on his behalf. She was shocked to realize that the employer intended to pay Jagdeep Dhillon the “training wage” of \$6.00 an hour for the maximum period of 500 hours, as allowed by law. However, through further discussion, the employer admitted training should only take 2 weeks, and was willing to pay the fair minimum wage of \$8.00 an hour after that period. Without his case manager’s help, Jagdeep and his family would have been struggling to make ends meet on this low salary.



Subway Artist Jagdeep at work

The employer was very impressed with Jagdeep’s hard work and his strong ethic. Therefore, he trained and shared with Jagdeep his experience and all aspects of running this Subway outlet. In two short years, Jagdeep became the owner and operator of the very same Subway shop that he began as a trainee. Jagdeep Dhillon is now a successful businessman, employing a half dozen staff and paying them fairly.

The case manager was also able to help Jagdeep's wife by signing her up for the Skills Link program and finding a suitable employer. Under this program, Amandeep gained valuable Canadian work experience and has been steadily employed ever since. Despite their initial hardships, both Jagdeep and Amandeep are productive

members of Canadian society. Inspired by the overwhelming support from their case manager, they are devoted to goodwill, and are very active in assisting newcomers.



Boss Jagdeep at his own Subway

VIRCS is known as a place to help immigrants like the Dhillons get started in their new life in Canada. Providing job search guidance and continuous support, case managers help and share in the success of their clients, from their first job to their first business.