

## CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS 2025

1ST INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED NURSES (IEN) GLOBAL CONVENTION · Orlando/FL · November 15,  
2025

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## Conference Agenda



**1<sup>st</sup> Internationally  
Educated Nurses (IEN)  
GLOBAL CONFERENCE**



- **Keynote Inspiration:** *Global IEN Impact: Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges* with former CGFNS CEO Franklin A. Shaffer, EdD, RN, FAAN, FFMRCISI.
- **NCLEX Updates:** Nancy Spector, PhD, RN, FAAN, NCSBN Nursing Education Policy Director, on NCLEX at Home and licensure innovations.
- **Inspirational Messages:** From ICN President Dr. Jose Luis Cobbos-Serrano, DAISY Founder Bonney Barnes, Canadian Nurses Association President Dr. Valerie Grdisa, Sigma Nursing President Dr. Liz Westcott, and AONL President-Elect Dr. Ena Williams.
- **Frontline IEN TED-Style Talks:** Inspiring journeys of resilience, adaptation, and triumph from our IEN panel of speakers.
- **Fireside Panels and Dialogues:** Conversations on empowerment, advocacy, and global leadership from IEN influencers and frontline workers.
- **Leadership and Celebration:** Induction Ceremony, Passing the Baton, DAISY recognition, FSIEN awarding.
- **Special Address:** Jewel Calub, DNP, RN, CEN, NEA-BC, CPXP, Associate Chief Nursing Officer, Orlando Health.
- **Networking and Connection:** Build cross-border professional networks with peers and leaders.
- **Continuing Education:** Earn 6 CEUs applied, pending approval.
- **Raffles and Giveaways:** Exciting prizes and surprises throughout the day.
- **Engage with Our Sponsors:** Explore opportunities from credentialing services, universities, NCLEX prep programs, and career development partners.

**Link:** <https://bit.ly/ienconference>

📅 November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
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## Agenda

- **8:00–9:00 AM (60 mins)** – Registration & Networking Breakfast
- **9:00–9:10 AM (10 mins)** – Welcome Remarks — Sharon Jackson, Convention Chair and SIENNA BOD
- **9:10–9:20 AM (10 mins)** – Founder's Speech — Dr. Jasper Tolarba
- **9:20–10:00 AM (40 mins)** – Keynote Address: Global IEN Impact: Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges — Dr. Franklin Shaffer
- **10:00–10:20 AM (20 mins)** – Policy Perspective: Strengthening the Global Nursing Workforce — NCSBN Policy Director Dr. Nancy Spector
- **10:20–10:35 AM (15 mins)** – Orlando Health Special Address — Dr. Jewel Calub
- **10:35–11:00 AM (25 mins)** – SIENNA BOD Induction Ceremony & Passing of the Baton
- **11:00–11:15 AM (15 mins)** – Morning Break
- **11:15 AM–12:00 PM (45 mins)** – IEN Stories on Stage – Part 1: Resilience Across Borders — Aaron Arcilla, Christian Costanza, Shweta Shekhawat
- **12:00 PM - 12:05 PM (5 mins)** - Special Message, Liz Westcott, President, Sigma
- **12:05–1:00 PM (55 mins)** – Panel 1: From Arrival to Advocacy
  - Moderator: Olivia Li, SIENNA Board of Director
  - Panelists: Rodolfo Lastimoso, Mugove Manjengwa, Enna Lamarre-Theodore
- **1:00–2:00 PM (60 mins)** – Networking Lunch (Gold Sponsors Presentation)
  - 1:00-1:30 PM - International Education Evaluation (IEE)
  - 1:30-2:00 PM - ANP Health
- **2:00–2:05 PM (5 mins)** – ICN President's Message - Dr. Jose Luis Cobbos-Serrano
- **2:05–2:50 PM (45 mins)** – IEN Stories on Stage – Part 2: My First 100 Days — Yennely Moss, Emmanuel Armo, Smitha Sony
- **2:50 PM–2:55 PM (5 mins)**- Special Message, Dr. Ena Williams, President-Elect, AONL
- **2:55 PM–3:00 PM (5 mins)** - Special Message, Dr. Valerie Grdisa, President, CNA
- **3:00 PM–3:55 PM (55 mins)** – Fireside Chat: IENs as Changemakers
  - Moderator: Rafael Tubongbanua, SIENNA Board of Director
  - Speakers: Dilshad Pirani, Sherif Olanrewaju, Farah Laurent
- **3:55–4:10 PM (15 mins)** – DAISY Foundation Video Message & Recognition of Honorees (2023 & 2024) - Bonnie Barnes, FAAN
- **4:10–5:00 PM (50 mins)** – Awarding of the Fellows of Internationally Educated Nurses - Dr. Laura Whittaker, Dr. Franklin Shaffer, and Dr. Paul Biluan
- **5:00–5:30 PM (30 mins)** – President's Message: SIENNA Global – Advancing Leadership, Advocacy, Collaboration, and Innovation for IENs — Dr. Paul Biluan, SIENNA President
- **5:30 PM** – Closing Remarks — Rola El Moubadder, Board of Director

Master of Ceremonies

Luis Vega, SIENNA Board of Director

Irene Azurin, SIENNA Board of Director

**SIENNA Organizational Chart**

**Executive Board  
2025-2027**



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Director



**Roula Moubadder,**  
MS, BSN, RN  
Director



**Naseem Issani,**  
BSN, RN, CACCN  
Director



**Sharon Jackson,**  
MSN, RN, NE-BC, CPHIMS  
Director

## Preface

On behalf of the Research and Publication Committee, it is my distinct honor and privilege to present the inaugural conference proceedings of the Society of Internationally Educated Nurses and Nursing Allies (SIENNA). This milestone publication commemorates the 1st Internationally Educated Nurses (IEN) Global Convention, a historic gathering that brought together voices, experiences, and scholarship from across borders, united by a shared commitment to advancing the contributions of internationally educated nurses worldwide.

Internationally educated nurses (IENs) represent a vital and dynamic segment of the global healthcare workforce. They embody clinical excellence, cultural intelligence, and resilience shaped by diverse training environments and lived experiences. Yet, their journeys are often marked by complex transitions, navigating licensure systems, adapting to new healthcare cultures, and addressing inequities in recognition and advancement. This conference, and the proceedings that follow, serve as both a platform and a testament: a platform to elevate these voices, and a testament to the collective strength and impact of the IEN community.

This volume captures the intellectual rigor and passion that defined the convention. The contributions herein span research, evidence-based practice innovations, policy analyses, and reflective narratives that illuminate the multifaceted experiences of IENs and their allies. Together, they advance critical conversations on workforce integration, equity, leadership development, and the future of global nursing collaboration. Importantly, these works do not merely describe challenges; they offer actionable insights, strategies, and pathways forward.

As Chair of the Research and Publication Committee, I extend my deepest gratitude to the authors, presenters, peer reviewers, and organizing leaders whose dedication made this publication possible. Your scholarship and advocacy exemplify the mission of SIENNA: to empower, connect, and elevate internationally educated nurses and those who stand alongside them.

It is our hope that this compilation will serve not only as a record of this landmark event but also as a catalyst for continued inquiry, collaboration, and transformation. May these proceedings inspire future research, inform policy and practice, and strengthen a global nursing community that is inclusive, equitable, and united in purpose.

With great pride and anticipation for what lies ahead, we present this first volume as the foundation of many more to come.

**Blaise Nieve, PhD, PhD, RN, CMSRN, NEA-BC, CAVRN, CPAFH, FSIEN, FFMRCISI**  
Chair, Research and Publication Committee  
Society of Internationally Educated Nurses and Nursing Allies (SIENNA)

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### Opening Remarks

**Sharon Jackson, MSN, RN, NE-BC, CPHIMS, FSIEN, FFNMRCIS**  
Chair, Convention and Awards Committee

Good morning, everyone — and welcome to history.  
Before anything else, I want to begin with a story.

My story.

And if you are an internationally educated nurse, I'm almost certain my story will sound a lot like yours.

Let's go back to 2004.

The Scholarship, the Arrival, the Questions

When I arrived in Cincinnati on a scholarship, I was greeted with open arms — and even more open questions.

People looked at me and said:

"Oh, you're Filipino? So why is your name Sharon? Why Sharon?"

As if all Filipinos were required to be named Maria, Jose, or Boyet.

Then came the next question — and this one tested every ounce of grace my parents taught me:

"Do you have pens and papers in the Philippines? And... Do you have eggs?"

At that point, I couldn't help myself.

I smiled politely and said, with the sweetest sarcasm:

"No. We don't have pens or paper. We write on the bark of trees."

And you know what?

They nodded — like this made perfect sense.

Like this was a normal, everyday, National Geographic reality.

Inside I was thinking:

"Lord, give me strength... and maybe give them Google."

I was amused, confused, shocked — and honestly flabbergasted — at how little people knew about the world outside the American lens.

Fast forward to the end of my scholarship. I was excited. Ready. Hopeful.

I applied for a nurse educator position — something I was absolutely qualified for.

And they immediately said:

"No. You can only apply for bedside nursing. Nothing else."

No explanation.

No review.

Not even a polite "Thank you."

Just "No."

Later, we learned the truth:

They lied.

Boldly.

Without hesitation.

And with the confidence of someone who assumed we'd never read the contract ourselves.

But here's the thing:

This story isn't rare.

It is just one of many untold stories that internationally educated nurses experience every single day.

Stories of discrimination.

Stories of dismissal.

Stories the world never hears.

The Night a Dream Was Born

About five years ago, Jasper and I were talking — really talking — about everything we had been through. The things all of you have lived through.

And in that conversation, we imagined a conference unlike anything we had ever seen:

Not dry scientific sessions.

Not another PowerPoint marathon that requires bottomless coffee to survive.

But a TED-style space where our stories, our journeys, and our humanity could finally take center stage.

That one talk — that simple, honest conversation — quietly planted the seed for the movement that has now brought us all together.

A dream was born that night.

And that dream is this moment.

Why We Are Here

We didn't leave our home countries just to find jobs.

We left because we had a purpose.

We left because we had vision.

And whether we realized it or not, we left to build something bigger than ourselves.

Today, we gather because:

- ◆ Our stories deserve a microphone.
- ◆ Our contributions deserve recognition.
- ◆ Our struggles deserve understanding.
- ◆ Our triumphs deserve celebration.
- ◆ And our global impact deserves to be seen — loudly, clearly, and proudly.

This movement was created for you.

For the unseen.

For the unheard.

For every IEN who has ever been underestimated, overlooked, or boxed into a corner they did not belong in.

This is your stage.

This is your movement.

This is our collective rise.

A Light Call to Courage

So today, I want you to be comfortable.

Be open.

Be bold.

If your story makes you laugh — share it.

If it makes you cry — share it.

If it makes everyone gasp — absolutely share it.

Because this is your moment.

Your freedom.

Your chance to speak without shrinking, without fear, without apology.

And let me be very clear:

You have earned this stage.

Welcome to the Movement

Ladies and gentlemen... internationally educated nurses from across the globe...

Welcome to a dream fulfilled.

Welcome to a vision realized.

Welcome to the First Internationally Educated Nurses Global Conference.

Welcome to SIENNA.

Welcome to a new era in global nursing.

Welcome to the beginning of a movement that will only grow stronger from here.

Today, we don't just stand.

We soar.

Welcome, everyone — and thank you for being part of history.

### **Founding President's Message**

***Dr. Jasper Tolarba, EdD, DNP, RN, CGNC, CNE, FACHE, FNNMRCNSI, FAAN, FESNO***  
Founding President, SIENNA

My dear colleagues, friends, and fellow internationally educated nurses (IENs),

Before I stand here as a leader, or as the founder of SIENNA, I stand here simply as a migrant - someone who has walked the same uncertain road many of you have walked. And I want to begin with the moment that changed everything for me.

Five years ago, during my time in the Kingdom of Jordan where I lived for a year as a Fulbright Research Scholar, I would escape the noise of the world and climb to one of the most sacred places on earth: Mount Nebo. It became my sanctuary- my place of stillness, reflection, and truth.

I would stand at the edge of this mountain and look at the horizon that Prophet Moses (or in Islam, Prophet Musa) himself once gazed upon.

A horizon filled with promise.

A horizon he reached after leading his people through years of hardship and wandering.

A horizon he could see... but would never enter.

As I looked out over that vast landscape, I suddenly understood something profound:

We are all, in our own way, the people of Moses.

We leave home with trembling hands and hopeful hearts.

We face uncertainty, loneliness, and sacrifice.

We cross deserts of doubt, seas of fear, and mountains of challenge.

And yet... we keep walking.

Because deep in our hearts, we too carry a promised future.

On that mountain, I thought of my fellow internationally educated nurses, scattered across the world, carrying not just degrees and credentials, but stories of courage that rarely get told.

And as I stood on Mount Nebo, a question echoed deep within me:

Who is amplifying our voices?

Who is carrying our narrative into the future?

In that moment - on that sacred mountaintop - something sparked within me.

And when I returned to the United States, I carried that spark with me. I carried the image of that horizon, the weight of that question, and the conviction that our stories must never be forgotten.

That spark became a flame.

That flame became SIENNA.

Not an organization, but a home.

A place where migrant nurses are not invisible, not silent, not overlooked - but celebrated, heard, and empowered.

When I look at all of you, I see the modern echo of an ancient people.

Like the people of Prophet Musa:

We are the bearers of promise.

We are the carriers of resilience.

We are the ones who, like Moses and his people, dared to walk toward a future we could not yet see.

And today, in this room, we stand on our own Mount Nebo together.

This...this moment is our horizon.

So welcome, fellow IENs and fellow migrants, to the very first IEN Global Convention.

**Keynote Speaker's Message:**  
**Global IEN Impact: Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges**  
***Franklin Shaffer, EdD, RN, FAAN, FFMRCIS***  
Global Consultant, Health Workforce and Migration

When I speak about the global impact of internationally educated nurses, I want you to understand something very clearly: nursing has always been global. We have always been connected. Many people immediately think of Florence Nightingale, the lady with the lamp, and rightly so. But I also want you to remember Virginia Henderson—someone I admired deeply, someone I was fortunate enough to know personally. She captured the essence of nursing in a way that still moves me today.

Think about her words. You are the ears for the deaf. The arms and legs for the amputee. The sight for the blind. And perhaps most profoundly, you are the one who helps guide a person toward a peaceful death. How many times have we done that? How many times have we been the only family someone had in their final moments? During the pandemic, nurses were there when no one else could be. That is the soul of our profession.

Now, I want you to consider the migrant nurse. The internationally educated nurse. You leave your home. You leave your family. You step into the unknown with courage that many people could never imagine. And you take care of strangers as if they were your own. That is bravery. That is compassion. That is nursing.

But we also have to face reality. The world is changing, migration is increasing, and nursing shortages are growing. One in every seven people in the world is a migrant. One in every seven nurses globally is a migrant. Seventy percent are women. These are not small numbers—this is the global workforce of healthcare.

And yet, despite this, I must tell you something that concerns me deeply: the U.S. government still classifies nursing not as a profession, but as an occupation. Think about the ramifications of that. Reimbursement. Respect. Policy influence. Recognition. We must change that. Nurses must be at the table, especially internationally educated nurses, because policy is shaping your future whether you are in the room or not.

That is why I believe so strongly in what SIENNA represents. You are an affinity group—something rare, something powerful. People are lonely in this world. They want to belong. And SIENNA is the only organization truly dedicated to the migrant nurse, the internationally educated nurse. What you do with this moment matters. Time is not on your side. Others will follow. You must move strategically, but you must move quickly.

And look at who you are. You are not beginners. You are seasoned clinicians. Leaders. Educators. Entrepreneurs. Many of you have 16, 20, 25 years of experience. Some people think experience makes nurses rigid. I disagree. You are change agents. You came to a new country—you had to change. You entered a new system—you adapted. You are not risk-averse. You took the greatest risk of all: leaving everything behind to build something new.

You are also highly educated. Doctoral degrees. Master's degrees. Specialty certifications. You are not simply filling gaps in healthcare. You are shaping the future of healthcare. You are becoming chief nursing officers, deans, scientists, policy influencers. But I want more of you in policy. Nursing needs you there.

We must also talk about ethics. Every individual has a right to migrate. But every country must maintain a healthcare system for its people. That is the balancing act. Ethical international recruitment is essential. Sustainability matters. Justice matters.

And never forget: migrant nurses contribute far beyond the bedside. You send remittances home. You lift families out of poverty. Hundreds of millions of people globally benefit because a nurse chose to migrate. That is impact.

I will never forget the pandemic. New York was a hotspot. We called for nurses willing to go. Over 300 stepped forward—foreign educated nurses. Every one of them. Ready to risk their lives. And do you know how many were selected? Zero. Yet you and I both know who carried healthcare through that crisis. Migrant nurses did.

So I say to you: know your value. Market your brand. Own nursing. Build your voice. Build your organization. Do not let this slip through your fingers.

Because in every hospital, every classroom, every home where care is given, our worlds are connected. The heart of healing has no nationality. It beats in every nurse who cares, every patient who hopes, and every act of compassion that keeps our world alive.

And my friends, you are doing it. But you have more to do.

**Policy Perspective:  
Strengthening the Global Nursing Workforce**  
*Nancy Spector, PhD, RN, FAAN*

Director of Nursing Education Policy, National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN)

**Problem / Argument / Issue:**

Internationally educated nurses (IENs) are vital to addressing ongoing nursing workforce shortages in the United States; however, their transition into practice is often hindered by complex and variable regulatory requirements. Differences across state Nurse Practice Acts (NPAs), evolving licensure standards, language proficiency expectations, and credentialing processes contribute to confusion and barriers to workforce integration. From a regulatory perspective, balancing public protection with the need to support a globally mobile nursing workforce remains a persistent challenge.

**Aims / Objectives:**

This presentation aims to (1) provide an overview of U.S. nursing regulatory frameworks as they relate to IENs, (2) examine current policy developments influencing licensure pathways, and (3) highlight evidence-based resources from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) that support IEN integration and nursing education quality.

**Methods:**

A policy-focused review of regulatory frameworks was conducted, including analysis of NPAs, state-based licensure requirements, and the NCSBN Model Act and Rules. Current areas of revision were examined, including language proficiency standards, oversight of cross-border nursing education, simulation-to-clinical hour ratios, and emerging considerations related to artificial intelligence in nursing education. Key NCSBN initiatives were also reviewed, including the Annual Report Program, the Nurse Licensure Guidance Tool, and the Resource Manual for Licensure of Internationally Educated Nurses, alongside resources addressing fraud prevention and credential verification.

**Implications for Nursing:**

Enhancing regulatory clarity and access to evidence-based licensure resources is essential to safely integrating IENs into the U.S. workforce while maintaining public protection. Strengthened guidance, standardized quality indicators, and supportive regulatory policies can improve licensure navigation, promote workforce diversity, and contribute to a more resilient and globally responsive nursing profession.

**Keywords:** internationally educated nurses (IENs), nursing regulation, nurse practice acts (NPAs), licensure pathways, workforce integration

**Special Address:**

**Rising Together: The IEN Leadership Journey**

***Jewel Crisan Melad Calub, DNP, RN, CEN. NEA-BC, CPXP***

Associate Chief Nursing Officer, Orlando Regional Medical Center

**Problem / Argument / Issue:**

Internationally educated nurses (IENs) contribute essential clinical expertise and cultural competence to U.S. healthcare systems, yet many face steep barriers to advancement, including licensure transitions, limited local support networks, and uncertainty navigating leadership pathways. Leadership development for IENs is often nonlinear and requires intentional support structures. This presentation highlights an IEN leader's journey from immigration and reinvention to executive nursing leadership, emphasizing how education, mentorship, and organizational culture can accelerate growth and broaden impact.

**Aims / Objectives:**

The presentation aims to (1) share a personal IEN leadership journey grounded in resilience, faith, and lifelong learning; (2) clarify the distinct and complementary roles of mentors, sponsors, and coaches in career progression; and (3) demonstrate how inclusive healthcare organizations can elevate IEN contributions and strengthen culturally competent care across diverse communities.

**Methods:**

Using reflective narrative, the speaker traces her professional development from early nursing practice in the Philippines to immigration in the United States and progressive leadership roles culminating in associate chief nursing officer responsibilities. The presentation integrates leadership lessons and practical guidance, including the "mentor-sponsor-coach" framework and strategies for seeking support, building credibility through education and certification, and embracing opportunities despite self-doubt. Organizational exemplars are used to illustrate how mission-driven systems support workforce development and quality care.

**Implications for Nursing:**

This talk reinforces that leadership is rooted in influence, integrity, and empathy—not position alone. Investing in education, building relationships with mentors/sponsors/coaches, and fostering inclusive professional environments can help IENs thrive as leaders. Strengthening these pathways supports workforce retention, improves team performance, and advances culturally competent patient-centered care in increasingly global health systems.

**Keywords:** Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs), Nursing Leadership Development, Mentorship and Sponsorship, Workforce Diversity and Inclusion, Career Advancement in Nursing

## **IEN Stories on Stage Part 1: Resilience Across Borders**

***Aaron Arcilla, RN***

Medical-Surgical Nurse, AdventHealth Daytona

Creator, Aaron.the.RN

### **Problem / Argument / Issue:**

Internationally educated nurses often experience profound cultural, emotional, and professional upheaval when migrating to the United States. Beyond clinical transition, immigrant nurses must navigate unfamiliar systems such as housing, credit, transportation, and delayed workforce entry, challenges that can lead to isolation, self-doubt, and the feeling of starting life over again. This presentation explores the realities of being “reborn” as a nurse immigrant in America, where adaptation extends far beyond the bedside.

### **Aims / Objectives:**

The purpose of this presentation is to share a personal story of resilience during the first months of migration, highlight the unseen struggles many IENs face, and inspire immigrant nurses to find meaning, strength, and hope through community, faith, and perseverance. The speaker also aims to affirm the role of SIENNA in supporting nurses through this transition.

### **Methods:**

Through reflective storytelling and humor, the speaker describes cultural adjustments, financial and logistical hardships, delays in employment, and the emotional toll of rebuilding identity in a new country. Family support, personal faith, and creative outreach through social media became key strategies for coping, mentoring others, and transforming frustration into purpose.

### **Implications for Nursing:**

This narrative emphasizes that immigrant nurses are not taking jobs but bringing global experience, adaptability, and compassion as vital assets to the U.S. healthcare system. Supporting IENs through mentorship, belonging, and shared storytelling strengthens workforce integration, resilience, and culturally competent care. Compassion, the speaker reminds us, is a universal language that needs no translation.

**Keywords:** Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs), Migration and Cultural Transition, Resilience in Nursing, Workforce Integration, Narrative and Lived Experience

## **IEN Stories on Stage Part 1: Resilience Across Borders**

***Christian Costazza, BSN, RN***

Senior Therapeutic Area Specialist, Cardiovascular Division

Founder, Evolve & Achieve Academy

### **Problem / Argument / Issue:**

Internationally educated nurses often face uncertainty, discomfort, and repeated reinvention as they transition across countries, cultures, and healthcare systems. While nursing is deeply meaningful, many nurses experience moments of feeling “stuck,” questioning whether their current circumstances represent the limits of their growth. For migrant nurses, transformation requires not only opportunity, but the courage to step into unfamiliar environments where fear and adaptation become part of the journey.

### **Aims / Objectives:**

The purpose of this presentation is to share a personal narrative of professional migration from Italy to Ireland, the United Kingdom, and ultimately the United States, highlighting how courage fuels transformation. The speaker aims to encourage nurses to embrace discomfort as a catalyst for growth and to recognize that meaningful opportunities often emerge only after taking the first leap forward.

### **Methods:**

Through reflective storytelling and humor, the speaker recounts the challenges of starting over in new systems, including language barriers, cultural adjustment, and fear of failure. By framing courage as a “muscle” strengthened through repeated action, the presentation emphasizes resilience, persistence, and learning through uncertainty. The speaker connects individual leaps, whether geographic, academic, or personal, to a broader shared experience among internationally educated nurses.

### **Implications for Nursing:**

This message underscores that transformation in nursing leadership and practice begins with courage rather than certainty. Supporting IENs in embracing growth strengthens workforce resilience, global collaboration, and excellence in patient care. Together, internationally educated nurses form a community that advances the profession by leaping beyond limitations and moving forward with purpose.

**Keywords:** Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs), Courage and Professional Growth, Migration and Career Mobility, Resilience and Adaptation, Transformational Nursing Journey

## **IEN Stories on Stage Part 1: Resilience Across Borders**

***Shweta Shekhawat, RN, CDE***

Cardiovascular Nurse, AdventHealth Orlando

### **Problem / Argument / Issue:**

Internationally educated nurses often associate migration and professional transition with necessity or hardship, yet many also pursue change out of curiosity and a desire for continued growth. Even when nurses achieve stability, respect, and professional success in one system, comfort can become limiting if it discourages exploration, adaptability, and lifelong learning. This presentation explores the challenge and value of seeking transformation even when life feels secure.

### **Aims / Objectives:**

The purpose of this presentation is to share a personal journey across healthcare systems in India, Canada, and the United States, emphasizing that professional growth is an intentional choice. The speaker aims to encourage nurses to embrace change as a pathway to deeper resilience, expanded perspective, and greater impact in patient care and leadership.

### **Methods:**

Through reflective storytelling, the speaker describes beginning her career in India after completing a prestigious fellowship at AIIMS, followed by major transitions to Canada and later the U.S. Each move required rebuilding professional identity, adapting to new documentation practices, team dynamics, and cultural expectations. The speaker highlights how restarting is not regression but an opportunity to strengthen empathy, humility, and resilience. Pursuing advanced education toward becoming a Family Nurse Practitioner further reflects the commitment to lifelong learning.

### **Implications for Nursing:**

This narrative reinforces that growth often begins when nurses step beyond comfort and remain open to reinvention. International transitions deepen cultural competence, strengthen professional adaptability, and expand the capacity to advocate and connect with diverse populations. Seeking change despite stability supports a nursing workforce grounded in courage, curiosity, and continuous development.

**Keywords:** Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs), Professional Growth and Lifelong Learning, Migration and Career Transition, Cultural Competence, Resilience and Adaptability

### **Empowerment Talk: From Arrival to Advocacy**

#### **Overcoming Barriers, Building Bridges: The IEN Journey and Their Contributions**

Rodolfo D. Lastimosa, Jr., RN, RP, PT, RM | Mugove Manjengwa, MScN, RN | Enna Lamarre-Theodore, DNP, RN

#### **Problem / Argument / Issue:**

Internationally educated nurses (IENs) contribute vital expertise to healthcare systems in Canada and the United States, yet their transition is often marked by cultural adjustment, systemic barriers, and professional undervaluing of foreign credentials. Panelists described the emotional weight of starting over, navigating licensure requirements, adapting to unfamiliar healthcare environments, managing economic pressures, and confronting biases despite extensive prior experience. These challenges highlight the ongoing need for stronger pathways that support IEN integration, equity, and recognition within nursing practice and leadership.

#### **Aims / Objectives:**

This panel aimed to explore the lived journey of IENs from arrival to advocacy, emphasizing resilience, mentorship, and leadership development. The speakers sought to inspire IENs to view their experiences as strengths, encourage nurse leaders to create inclusive environments, and demonstrate how immigrant nurses can move beyond survival into roles of influence in governance, education, and policy.

#### **Methods:**

Through personal narratives and professional reflections, panelists shared strategies that supported their growth: building community through cultural and faith-based networks, seeking mentorship and peer guidance, embracing leadership opportunities, and leveraging unique roles to drive innovation. Examples included advancing mental health expertise, shaping regulatory excellence through nursing governance, developing new clinical programs, and contributing to public health policy and emergency guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Implications for Nursing:**

The panel underscores that empowering IENs strengthens the nursing profession through diversity, global perspectives, and culturally competent care. Advocacy, fair licensure systems, mentorship, and leadership pathways are essential for ensuring immigrant nurses are not only welcomed but fully integrated as change agents shaping healthcare's future.

**Keywords:** Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs), Workforce Integration and Equity, Nursing Advocacy and Leadership, Migration and Professional Transition, Mentorship and Inclusion

## Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) Stories on Stage Part 2: My First 100 Days

*Yennely Moss, BSN, RN*  
Clinical Success Manager

### **Problem / Argument / Issue:**

The first 100 days of practice for internationally educated nurses (IENs) are often filled with emotional and professional challenges. Even experienced nurses can feel as though they are starting over when entering a new healthcare system. New clinical environments bring unfamiliar medications, documentation systems, communication barriers, cultural shock, and an underlying fear of making mistakes during transition. These early experiences can lead to isolation, self-doubt, and stress, despite the hope and determination that IENs bring with them.

### **Aims / Objectives:**

The purpose of this presentation is to give an honest personal reflection on the lived reality of the first 100 days as a newly arrived IENs. By sharing these experiences, the goal is to navigate unfamiliar clinical practices, communication challenges, workplace culture, professional identity and to highlight IENs resilience, and encourage healthcare teams to foster belonging, empathy, and support during this critical transition period.

### **Methods:**

Through personal narrative and observation, the speaker describes the emotional intensity of beginning work in a new country, standing in a new hospital with a new badge, yet feeling like it is the first day of nursing all over again. Stories of immigrant nurses who cried after shifts, questioned their interactions, and struggled with unfamiliar cultural aspects illustrate the adjustment process. At the same time, the speaker emphasizes how learning, adaptation, and community support help nurses regain confidence and find their voice.

### **Implications for Nursing:**

This story reminds the profession that immigrant nurses do not lack skill; they need understanding, guidance, and inclusion. When colleagues and leaders extend empathy, the first 100 days become not just survival, but the foundation of empowerment and long-term success. Immigrant nurses strengthen healthcare by proving that compassion and competence know no borders.

**Keywords:** Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs), Transition to Practice, Cultural Adaptation and Communication, Early Career Adjustment, Resilience and Support Systems

## **IEN Stories on Stage Part 2: My First 100 Days**

***Emmanuel Armoo, BSN, RN***

Registered Nurse and Clinical Coordinating Staff, Monument Health

### **Problem / Argument / Issue:**

Internationally educated nurses (IENs) often experience profound transition when relocating to practice in the United States. Beyond licensure and immigration hurdles, the journey involves emotional resilience, cultural adjustment, and the challenge of starting over professionally. Drawing from my experience moving from Ghana to the U.S., I reflect on how migration reshapes identity, tests perseverance, and deepens one's understanding of nursing as both knowledge and compassion.

### **Aims / Objectives:**

The purpose of this presentation is to share my first 100 days as a newly arrived registered nurse in the United States, highlighting the formative experiences that shaped my growth. I aim to encourage fellow IENs to embrace adversity as part of the process, remain grounded in purpose, and recognize the value of mentorship and organizational support in successful integration.

### **Methods:**

Through personal storytelling, I describe early lessons in patience and growth from childhood, my curiosity-driven path into nursing, and frontline service during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ghana. I will disclose my journey of NCLEX preparation through coaching, overcoming personal setbacks and adapting to new healthcare systems during orientation in South Dakota. Clinical encounters, ranging from complex patient care to moments of humor and reflection, reinforced the importance of holistic, compassionate practice.

### **Implications for Nursing:**

This narrative illustrates that IEN integration is not only about competence, but about resilience, empathy, and shared humanity. Supporting migrant nurses through mentorship, clinical resources, and organizations like SIENNA strengthens the global nursing workforce. IENs bring gifts of adaptability, compassion, and lived experience that can shape healthcare systems for the betterment of humanity worldwide.

**Keywords:** Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs), Transition to Practice, Migration and Cultural Adaptation, Resilience and Identity Formation, Mentorship and Workforce Integration

## **IEN Stories on Stage Part 2: My First 100 Days**

***Smitha Sony, MSN, FNP, APRN, CNE***

APP Supervisor and IBD Clinical APP, Digestive Health Institute, Orlando Health

### **Problem / Argument / Issue:**

The first 100 days as an internationally educated nurse in the United States can be both inspiring and deeply challenging. Migration brings hope for opportunity, but it also introduces cultural adjustment, professional uncertainty, and feelings of isolation. Nurses must adapt to new healthcare expectations, communication styles, and unfamiliar systems, often while questioning their confidence and identity in a foreign environment.

### **Aims / Objectives:**

The purpose of this presentation is to reflect on the speaker's personal journey as a nurse arriving from India with dreams and determination. By sharing this story, the speaker aims to encourage other immigrant nurses to view early struggles as part of transformation and to recognize that resilience is built through the process of adaptation.

### **Methods:**

Through personal narrative, the speaker describes the emotional and professional realities of the first months in America. Adjusting to a new culture, language, food, and workplace expectations required courage and persistence. Differences in documentation protocols, communication methods, and professional norms created moments of self-doubt, especially when accent or quietness felt like barriers. Outside of work, loneliness and cultural distance were difficult, yet the speaker gradually learned to embrace both Indian identity and American life, finding balance and belonging over time.

### **Implications for Nursing:**

This story highlights that assimilation does not mean losing one's roots, but growing into a stronger, more confident nurse. Internationally educated nurses bring resilience, cultural richness, and compassion that strengthen healthcare systems. The first 100 days may test immigrant nurses, but they also shape them into powerful voices and leaders who can support others on the same journey.

**Keywords:** Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs), Transition to Practice, Cultural Adaptation and Identity, Resilience and Confidence Building, Workforce Integration and Belonging

### **Fireside Chat:**

#### **Nursing Advocacy & Global Voice: IENs as Changemakers—Speaking Up, Rising Up**

Dilshad Pirani, MScN, RN | Dr. Farah Laurent, RN | Dr. Sherif Olanrewaju, PGDE, MPS, RN

#### **Problem / Argument / Issue:**

Internationally educated nurses (IENs) strengthen healthcare systems worldwide, yet they continue to face systemic inequities, barriers to licensure, lack of recognition, and exclusion from leadership and policy spaces. The panelists shared personal experiences of witnessing capable immigrant nurses being unable to practice, encountering credentialing delays, professional gatekeeping, and underrepresentation of IEN-specific needs in workforce integration. These realities underscore the urgent need for advocacy that centers dignity, equity, and inclusion across borders.

#### **Aims / Objectives:**

This fireside chat aimed to highlight IENs as essential changemakers in global nursing, emphasizing advocacy as both a professional responsibility and a moral imperative. The speakers sought to inspire IENs to amplify their voices, build visibility, pursue leadership, and engage in policy reform while encouraging organizations like SIENNA to strengthen platforms for collective empowerment.

#### **Methods:**

Through reflective storytelling and leadership insights, panelists described advocacy strategies rooted in resilience, cultural humility, courage, and mentorship. Approaches included organizing within state nursing associations, supporting IEN licensure navigation through community alliances, conducting scholarship to elevate IEN transition experiences, mentoring emerging nurses, and building personal and digital platforms to ensure global visibility. Panelists emphasized the distinct roles of mentors, sponsors, and coaches in transforming isolation into belonging and leadership.

#### **Implications for Nursing:**

This discussion reinforces that IEN advocacy advances not only immigrant nurse integration but also the future of equitable healthcare systems. By speaking up, rising together, and shaping policy from the bedside to the boardroom, IENs contribute essential global perspectives, innovation, and leadership. Fireside conversations such as this affirm that no one can tell the IEN story better than IENs themselves, and that collective voice is a catalyst for change.

**Keywords:** Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs), Nursing Advocacy and Policy, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), Leadership and Global Health, Workforce Integration and Representation

**Current President's Message:**

**SIENNA Global – Advancing Leadership, Advocacy, Collaboration, and Innovation for IENs**

***Dr. Paul Biluan***

SIENNA President

**Introduction**

I am just very impressed with the conference we have today. All the speakers, all the guests of honor, the Internationally Educated Nurses and Advocates who are here.

I could not be prouder to be standing in front of you.

We are here today to share our collective experiences as IENs. As nurses who have moved from one country to another, we have integrated, assimilated, and acculturated.

We have learned new languages and adapted to new ways of practicing nursing. We have contributed not only to the healthcare workforce in our new homes but also carried the strengths of our home countries with us.

Let me tell you my story. I came to the United States (US) in 2017 from the Philippines after almost 10 years of waiting, due to visa backlogs and the complex immigration requirements.

Just a few examples of the red tape IENs across the globe must go through. Can anyone here relate? I was so excited to come over here, because finally, my dream, and my family's dream are coming true.

However, I was in for a wild surprise. Within 3 months I was having panic attacks and wanted to go back home because I was overwhelmed with the transition process.

I wish I had a mentor or a support group who helped me in my early journey as an IEN.

Who among you wished someone would guide you in your early days as an IEN? I am not alone. Due to the emotional, psychosocial, physical, and professional challenges I endured, I knew I had to do something to help nurses who will be going through the same journey after me.

I found Lefora Filipino Nurses to USA, an online Facebook community of immigrant nurses sharing their journey, steps and processes they had to take, and their integration into US life. At that time there were roughly 3,000 members. I started documenting my journey, sharing my stories, and connecting with nurses here in the USA and everywhere in the globe. I offered advice, guidance, and assistance to new nurses coming over. From immigration and visa processing, to finding their apartments, getting their first cars, SSNs, opening their banks, understanding credit scores, how to fill up a gas tanks – I know it is funny, because in the Philippines we don't fill up our gas tanks, I don't even know how to do it when I first arrive here. I shared everything that I think could help nurses like me in this journey.

Fast forward today, that Facebook group now has 241,000 members. I have the pleasure of serving and leading the group all these years with my friends who are here with us today – Marvin, Anna, and Kaye (hey guys, stand up please). Through that Facebook community, I learned about the power of community, support, networking, and advocacy. I found a new mission – to help and advocate for IENs.

But there is more than just a community that I was looking for. I wanted to take it a notch further. I began to seek organizations that cater to IENs specifically. Luckily, or it must be fate, I found SIENNA through LinkedIn. This was 2023. Jasper and the team barely formed the organization.

Quick backstory – my LinkedIn had been inactive for years. I reactivated it for the sole reason of following Kaye Mendoza, as she penetrates the professional world to bring to everyone’s attention the abuse and exploitation of IENs. Thanks to Kaye, I found Jasper, who I already hosted in a podcast in the past, and SIENNA. I remember them posting a call from the Board of Directors. I approached Jasper and asked, ‘Are you part of this organization?’ he said yes and invited me to apply. My intention was only to volunteer. I’ve never served on a board before. It spooked me. But you know what, there was something about its name that drew me – Society of INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED NURSES in North America. Yes, this organization focuses on internationally educated nurses, the IENS, you and me. SIENNA is not just about the gathering of internationally educated nurses; it is an organization that celebrates the lived experiences of IENS.

SIENNA stands as a home for IENs, a beacon to guide them in their tumultuous journey. A network of nurses and allies at all stages of their journey. Early career nurses. Seasoned nurses.

And speaking of the Internationally educated nurses. YOU!!! Your presence here today is important for the message we’re sending—not only in North America but globally.

### **Who are IENs?**

For context, I want us to have a real definition of IENs.

IENs are nurses who earned their primary nursing degree outside the country where they currently work. Many of us moved from developing to developed countries for career growth and educational opportunities. We packed our bags, uprooted our whole lives, and started all over again.

IENs face systemic barriers including licensure complexities, cultural adaptation, lack of mentorship, discrimination and implicit biases. I remember one of our fellow candidates from Canada sharing how it took her years to get her Canadian license because of educational and regulatory barriers – even though she was highly qualified because of her extensive experience as a nurse in her home country. I had a student from years ago who moved to Canada and could not get through these regulatory barriers that he quit nursing altogether. That is one less nurse that could have provided care to a community.

I want to pause here for a minute so we can reflect. In your IEN journey, think about a time when you met a significant barrier, a challenge that affected your journey to get where you are today.

Can you share that? These barriers can get the best of anyone. How many IENs gave up because they felt it was a losing battle? Yet here you are. Sharing your story and your lived experience.

The other day, I was a keynote speaker in Sigma Nursing Beta Alpha Chapter Induction.

I shared the importance of representation. I shared with those nurses the importance of having a seat at the table. IENs need to be in tables where decisions are made - about nursing. About the healthcare workforce. About the nursing shortage. But why are we not being offered seats on those tables?

And that’s why we have SIENNA, to represent our IEN community, not only in North America, but GLOBALLY. We created a table so we can bring everyone in to sit with us. To address the systemic barriers, we go through. IENs story is a story of strength. Of resilience.

We are breaking barriers, challenging archaic systems and regulations.  
We are front runners, paving the way in global health systems and healthcare workforce mobility.  
We are Innovation drivers – adapting, evolving, and bringing rich international perspectives to global health concerns.

### **Call for advancing leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and innovation for IENs globally**

IENs make up 1 out of 7 nurses globally.

Our work is beyond the US and Canada. We have IENs working in all parts of the world.

SIENNA has ambassadors representing all 6 continents. There may be a nurse in Antarctica base camp (is this what we call it?) that we can recruit to cover all 7 continents - membership committee chair Olivia and co-chair Luis will work on this right?

What we are doing here is bigger than all of us.

I remember in one of the conversations I had with one of our ambassadors recently - he shared to me that he was asked by one of his colleagues - IS SIENNA a legitimate organization?

Now help me with this, what do we think? I say my answer is - YES, WE EXIST.

You see my point now. The world is noticing. The world is paying attention.

But SIENNA's mandate is more than providing an organization for nurses to write into their LinkedIn profiles.

No. We are an organization who ACTS, MOVES, IMPLEMENTS.

We come together to leverage our experiences and our expertise to advance leadership, education, advocacy, DEI, social justice and scholarship on the global stage.

This is what I call the LEADS competencies.

We need to evolve from the "Bedside Mentality" - where nurses think that our role is limited to providing bedside care. We need to STEP UP as leaders, educators, advocates, DEI champions, and scholars. We need to advocate for policies impacting global nursing mobility; policies addressing the nursing shortage. Policies involving ethical recruitment process - so that no IEN will be subjected to exploitation, abuse, and trafficking.

We need to collaborate with our peers globally so that we can elevate the IENs and the nursing profession, so that nurses can function to the full extent of their education and training in line with the vision of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

We need to innovate.

We need to use our voice to amplify our causes.

We need to increase our presence in the global space - using social media to increase awareness about the experience of IENs.

We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. We thank them for paving the way.

But there is more work to do. This is a team effort - we are all hands-on deck!

One of my favorite quotes is - teamwork makes the dream work.

I keep hearing this from our convention chair, and board director Sharon - we must change our perspectives from ME to WE. She put this in our SIENNA anthem; did you hear that?

Now here's my challenge to you. What can you do to elevate IENs? You don't have to look anywhere. Start where you are. Start with the organizations you belong to and

volunteer. Start showing up. Start talking about IENs.  
You want to see change? Then be that change you want to see.

I am a strong believer of the PAY-IT-FORWARD principle.  
I tell my mentees, and students - you don't have to thank me, or to repay me. Pay it forward. Help another nurse.  
This is how we can make change. Pay it forward.  
Remember that big waves start with small ripples.  
If you want to get involved in SIENNA, we have a lot of volunteer opportunities.  
And we invite all nurses - regardless of experience or background.

Our online forum and community are seeking moderators to initiate and lead discussions and engage our members.

Our Journal of the Society of Internationally Educated Nurses or JSIEN, a free and open access, peer-reviewed journal, is looking for papers. Submit your stories. Submit your scholarly work. Let's get that published and circulated. Contact our editor in chief Emilene.

Our research team will soon launch our Scholarly Writing course where nurses will be trained on how to write for publication, thanks to the initiative of our board member and chair Rafael.

Our mentorship team, under the leadership of board member Rola, are launching our mentorship program where nurses will be paired with mentors - keep an eye on our application call for Mentors and Mentees soon.

Our policy, advocacy and JEDI team are teaming up to launch a central repository, a library of tools and resources that will help guide IENs. We will launch our advocacy council - a committee who will advance advocacy of our IENs in the global stage. Thank you to our board members and chairs Sherif, Alessandro, Naseem and Board VP Rasha.

Our PR team are working on forging collaborations with organizations and institutions globally - if your organization wants to work with SIENNA, please contact our PR chair board member Olivia and co-chair Luis.

Our NOMELEC team is preparing for the board of directors' application soon. If you want to join this team, contact our chair and board member Irene and co-chair Romeo.

Our education team is going to launch more high-quality CE courses. We secured our CE Provider approval from the Alabama Board of Nursing. We partnered with Sigma Nursing to offer free CE courses through the Nursing Learning Exchange. Thanks to the collaboration of our chair of education Sharon, board member Jennifer, CE Program Director Meredith, and Consultant Gabriel.

And we welcome volunteers - for our Social Media committee, contact Board Secretary Luis. For the finance committee - Board Treasurer Gerry. There is more work to do. And this is just the beginning.

I encourage you to go to our website and click GET INVOLVED. Or contact me and I can help you. There are so many ways to share your expertise to help catapult SIENNA to the global arena. Now is the time to act.

### **Conclusion**

Now before I conclude this talk, I want to leave you with this quote from Abraham Lincoln

The best way to predict the future is to create it.

The future of IENs and the GLOBAL NURSING WORKFORCE rely on YOU; we need to come together to create this future.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to our board of directors and convention committee for making this happen. I appreciate all your efforts and the time you put in to bring us together. To our esteemed guests in-person and virtually, thank you for sharing your time with us. We appreciate your presence.

To our sponsors - your support (choose correct word here) greatly helped in advancing our mission, we hope to continue to collaborate with you on our MANY future projects.

Thank you, Orlando Health, Orlando Regional Medical Center, Dr. Jewel Calub and the whole OH team - Thank you for this space and for all the help.

Maraming Salamat. Muchas Gracias. Grazie Milli. Terimah Kasi. Merci beacoup. Obrigado. Danke shon. Arigato Goizaismasu, Shokran Kathir, Sie Sie Nih,

THANK YOU.