

From India to Wingham: A Young Entrepreneur's Journey

Born into an entrepreneurial family, Vraj and his brother Shrey quickly learned the keys to succeeding in business.

"For entrepreneurs, first of all, it's important to be disciplined. Then, it's good communication with the customers," says Vraj, who owns Wingham Minimart with his brother Shrey.

"By discipline, I mean for people my age, you have to be willing to stick with one place. Many young people want to explore the world and explore things. But for some of us, maybe 10% like me, we want to become good with finances and be part of the town and society. So we have to be disciplined and have good management. We have to pre-plan," he advises.

Vraj was born in a city of 5.5 million in western India. He's the youngest of two boys.

"I am the fourth generation who is doing business. My dad had business, my grandfather had business, my great grandfather also had a business back home," he shares.

Vraj and Shrey's father is a pharmacist, while his grandfather and great-grandfather were general store owners.

"I got everything, my inspiration, from my dad. I learned at a very small age about this kind of stuff. When I was small, I would finish school and go back home and go to my dad's store. So I know how he worked, how he struggled. From that, I got inspiration," Vraj says.

After completing his education, Vraj moved to Canada in 2021, where his brother Shrey had already settled. He landed in Regina, Saskatchewan, and worked at a pizza store as a manager for two years.

"It was winter when I arrived in November. It was minus 25 degrees. It was crazy," he remembers.

After gaining permanent residency, Vraj moved to Brampton to be closer to his brother. Quickly, the brothers decided to look for business opportunities.

"Business is in our blood," Vraj says.

When the brothers heard the Wingham Minimart was for sale, they knew they had to take a look.

Vraj was drawn to the community right away, appreciating its welcoming atmosphere and the sense of stability he found here.

“Everyone in the community was cooperative and peaceful.”

What stood out even more was the way customers embraced them.

“We got a great response,” Vraj remembers. “In the past, the business focused on selling cigarettes and lottery tickets. We’ve focused on groceries too and bought new coolers and got new products.”

As customers pop into the shop, Vraj recognizes most faces and greets everyone with a hello, remembering the regular customers’ orders.

“After our first four months, everything has run smoothly,” Vraj says.

Their first taste of business spurred a desire to take on more. Entering a partnership with two others, Vraj and Shrey purchased a local pizza franchise and bought another variety store.

“We like quiet towns,” Vraj says. “To immigrants or young people who live in cities, I would personally suggest that they move to small towns and communities where they can get better opportunities and proper jobs.”

Impressed with their business mindset, North Huron Economic Development Officer Ritu Bhardwaj nominated Vraj to be celebrated for his economic contributions in the I Am Huron campaign.

“Vraj is doing more than just building his own future, he’s actively contributing to the local economy and creating new opportunities for others in North Huron. Through his dedication and hard work, he provides exceptional service to the community, and at such a young age, his positive impact is undeniable,” Brardwaj says.

I Am Huron is a Huron County Immigration Partnership initiative that encouraged community nominations of immigrants making an impact in their community. The campaign celebrates the different ways people are shaping Huron County’s communities.

A community panel of judges selected Vraj Patel for his entrepreneurial initiative. He is the youngest of the seven people being recognized in the 2025 campaign.