



Shafagh Ganjikia



Simon Kaczor

innovation/manufacturing-related services, semiconductors, and software."

One such company in the Roanoke Valley is Prognosoft Inc., founded in 2002 by Shafagh Ganjikia and Simon Kaczor.

Both Safagh and Simon immigrated to Quebec as children—Safagh from Iran and Simon from Poland. They met while studying

science in the two year pre-university program. From there, Simon went on to earn his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and his master's degree in applied science at the Polytechnic School of Montreal. Safagh earned her bachelor's degree in physics at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and moved back to Montreal to earn her master's degree in biomedical engineering.

Upon completion of his master's degree, Simon worked for Bombardier Aerospace doing research for the Canadian military. When government budget cuts reduced the funding for research, he sought other opportunities and found Meridian in Roanoke, which sponsored his work visa to the United States. "All I knew about Roanoke was that it was in the mountains," says Simon, "but when I visited in November [of 1999] and was walking around in a T-shirt on the City Market, I decided I could enjoy living here."

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Executive Summary:

The founders of Roanoke's Prognosoft landed in Roanoke and found themselves at home.

By Janeson Keeley

A Duke University study has found that immigrant-founded companies in the United States generated \$52 billion in sales in 2005. According to InformationWeek, the businesses were "primarily in the high-tech fields of bioscience, computers/communications, defense/aerospace, environmental,



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After being hired at Meridian, Simon and Safagh married. Safagh was then able to immigrate as a dependent, but she could not get a job without having a company sponsor a work visa. She chose to start Prognosoft so she could work from home and care for their children, now five and seven.

Simon worked with Meridian when it had only two offices and 100 employees. "It was a small company, and I feel good about being a part of the core group that helped develop the products that helped it grow," he says with pride. However, after 10 years, Safagh asked Simon to join her full-time working for Prognosoft. He is the primary software developer, while she does the marketing and research. "We're Beauty and the geek," jokes Safagh.

A home-based business, Prognosoft specializes in custom software development

for engineers and scientists. The company is preparing for the national launch of its Web-based electronics recycling inventory and process management software. "There was no comprehensive software product for this growing industry," reports Simon, "so we developed a solution that addresses the needs of recycling companies but doesn't require them to have in-house IT teams."

In the future, they may spin their recycling software off into a company separate from Prognosoft. Safagh, still interested in biomedical engineering, is considering returning to school to study occupational therapy and related technologies in a lab setting.

But they have no intention of leaving the Roanoke Valley. "We both moved around a lot and never felt like we belonged," says Safagh. "Here we feel like we have roots." 

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