

## □ SURVEY □

In this issue, *Liaison* has conducted a mini-survey involving four Canadians between the ages of 20 and 22 who have already spent from five to 12 years of their lives abroad. You have probably already guessed that these are the children of foreign service families. Their lives have been quite different from those of children who were raised in the same city and the same environment, with no change of climate, culture or food, and with the same friends for many years. Let's hear what they have to say.



*Kari Jones*

• *How many years did you spend abroad?*

**Catherine Paquet:** I have spent eight of my 20 years abroad: two in Nigeria, two in France and four in Belgium. I think that the more you travel, the more strongly attached you feel to your native country. Living abroad, you always have a very real sense of nostalgia and you are always anxious to return home.

**Kari Jones:** I spent twelve and a half years abroad, in Australia, Trinidad, Ghana and Denmark.

**Michael Pardy:** I spent 10 years abroad in India, Kenya, and USA.

**Nathalie Beaulieu:** In all, I have spent four and a half years in various places abroad: Algeria, Ethiopia and Haiti.

• *Do you still feel like a Canadian, in spite of all the travelling?*

**Catherine:** Yes, very much so. Probably more than someone who had never left the country. But I am more aware of the existence of other nationalities and quite open to them.

**Kari:** When I came to Canada, I did not feel Canadian at all; however, after two years I do.

**Michael:** Yes, I still feel Canadian.

**Nathalie:** I still feel like a Canadian. However, after living in Haiti for two years, I had an adjustment to make. People found me to be different, and I, in turn, found them different. On a posting, I was quite prepared to accept their ways while retaining my Canadian identity.

• *Are you closer to the other members of your immediate family because you live under different conditions than your friends or cousins do?*

**Catherine:** I do not have any brothers or sisters, so the only family I had abroad was my parents. We were always very close, because my parents were my sole source of security, my point of reference. Their presence has always been, and still is, very dear to me. No one was in a better position to understand the insecurities and experiences that I had living abroad, and that drew us closer together.

**Kari:** I think that my relationship with my family is closer because of the way we rely on each other when we first arrive at a post.

**Michael:** Yes, my relations with other members of my family are closer.

**Nathalie:** I feel that living abroad draws us closer to our family. With friends, it's another story. They seem to have problems accepting the fact that someone is able to travel, see other countries, live in other places and become familiar with other nationalities.

• *Do you believe it is more difficult to learn when you are always changing countries and schools?*

**Catherine:** To be a successful student, the child of a diplomat must be very flexible. Travelling and changing schools often causes a good deal of insecurity. So there is always a difficult time of adjustment, when you feel very out of place in school. I think that the change of location is the difficult part, not the change of school program. It's not easy getting used to a new school!