

festival day on which the family goes to her paternal grandparents' grave in a Calgary cemetery, sets up a table to offer food, flowers and incense, and burns "spirit money" to ensure the prosperity of their ancestors in the afterlife.

"These are very old Chinese traditions that we carry on here in Canada. I've grown up touched by both traditions—the Canadian and the Chinese—so I'm neither a typical Canadian nor a typical Hong Konger. I occupy the CBC's middle ground."

Susan Sunday, a member of the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation, has maintained a sense of connection with her family and forebears through nearly three decades of service in the department.

At her nine postings abroad—to Africa, Europe, South America and Asia—she brought along a traditional Mohawk dress that took her two and a half years to sew. "And it has served me well," she says. "I even wore it to meet the King of Thailand."

In every apartment Sunday has lived in, she puts up a painting of a native dancer, done by one of her uncles, that always draws the attention of visitors. "They always find the painting beautiful and ask about the dancer," she says. "That gives me a chance to explain some of our traditions."

When Sunday was posted in the former Czechoslovakia, she was surprised to discover a profound interest in North American native life. Those most interested held gatherings at which everyone dressed in native costumes they had made themselves. "Their gear was not quite authentic, with Cree, Objibway and Sioux elements mixed up—but I think they wanted to emulate a freedom they saw in native people at a time when they were not fully free themselves. I found it impressive."

Now back at Headquarters as director of the Client Service Centre, Sunday goes back every other weekend to her reserve, where she renews her connection to the place she grew up.

All employees at Headquarters will recognize Mourad Balti, the friendly commissioner at the entrance to B Tower. He arrived in Canada from Tunisia in 2003. Although he has no relatives here, he celebrates Ramadan and his country's Independence Day with his many Tunisian friends. All summer, they play soccer, a favourite national sport.

Family is irreplaceable, and he goes back to Tunisia each year to renew his ties with his mother and three siblings.

"But in a sense, you can find 'family' wherever you are," Balti says. "We must always step forward to greet the other—something that people welcome here in the department. We have different cultures and languages, but au fond, we are all part of the human family."

Balti's sentiments are echoed by many DFAIT employees. As Roman Waschuk notes, having two cultures allows individuals to transcend the outward identities we construct. "With two cultural identities, you can't be entirely captured by either of them—so you're freer in a sense to know and be yourself."



photo: Geneviève Houle/DFAIT

Mourad Balti goes back to Tunisia each year to renew his ties with his mother and three siblings.



photo: Charles Emman/DFAIT

An Nguyen in her *ao dai*, the traditional tunic dress she wore for her Vietnamese wedding tea ceremony



photo: Mike Pinder Photography

Susan Sunday has enjoyed sharing her Akwesasne Mohawk traditions with friends and colleagues all over the world.