

Arcade Kakunze against a backdrop of Burundian art

photo: Michel Pixel/DFAIT



photo: Charles Enman/DFAIT

In her work at DFAIT, Yelena Fominykh offers the same kind of helping hand to travellers that she and her mother received from Canada many years ago.

Two young women in the department spent their early years in adjacent Eastern European countries during the first years of democracy after the fall of Communism.

Cristiana Nye, a member of the International Experience Canada team, was born in Romania. Her mother, a nuclear engineer, married a Canadian construction consultant working at the same nuclear energy facility in Romania. When Cristiana was eight, the family moved to the Republic of Korea, where her parents worked on another nuclear energy project.

Two years later, the family moved to Canada, and Cristiana arrived with only vague impressions of North American life. "At school, I could never identify pop culture references—and I still can't," she says. She was surprised at how informally students were allowed to dress—in fact, the lifestyle as a whole was more liberal than anything she had known. Less than two years later, the family moved again—this time to China for another overseas project.

Today, she feels fortunate to have grown up among different peoples, cultures and customs. "My experiences have taught me that there isn't just one way to look at the world. There is always more than one solution to any problem—and we should carry this realization with us wherever we go."

In her current work, Cristiana is helping Canadian and international youth gain travel, work and life experiences abroad. "The work is rewarding—I'm happy to be part of a team that helps nearly 20,000 young Canadians each year immerse themselves in another culture."

Yelena Fominykh, a travel information officer, was born in Moldova. Life was hard after the dissolution

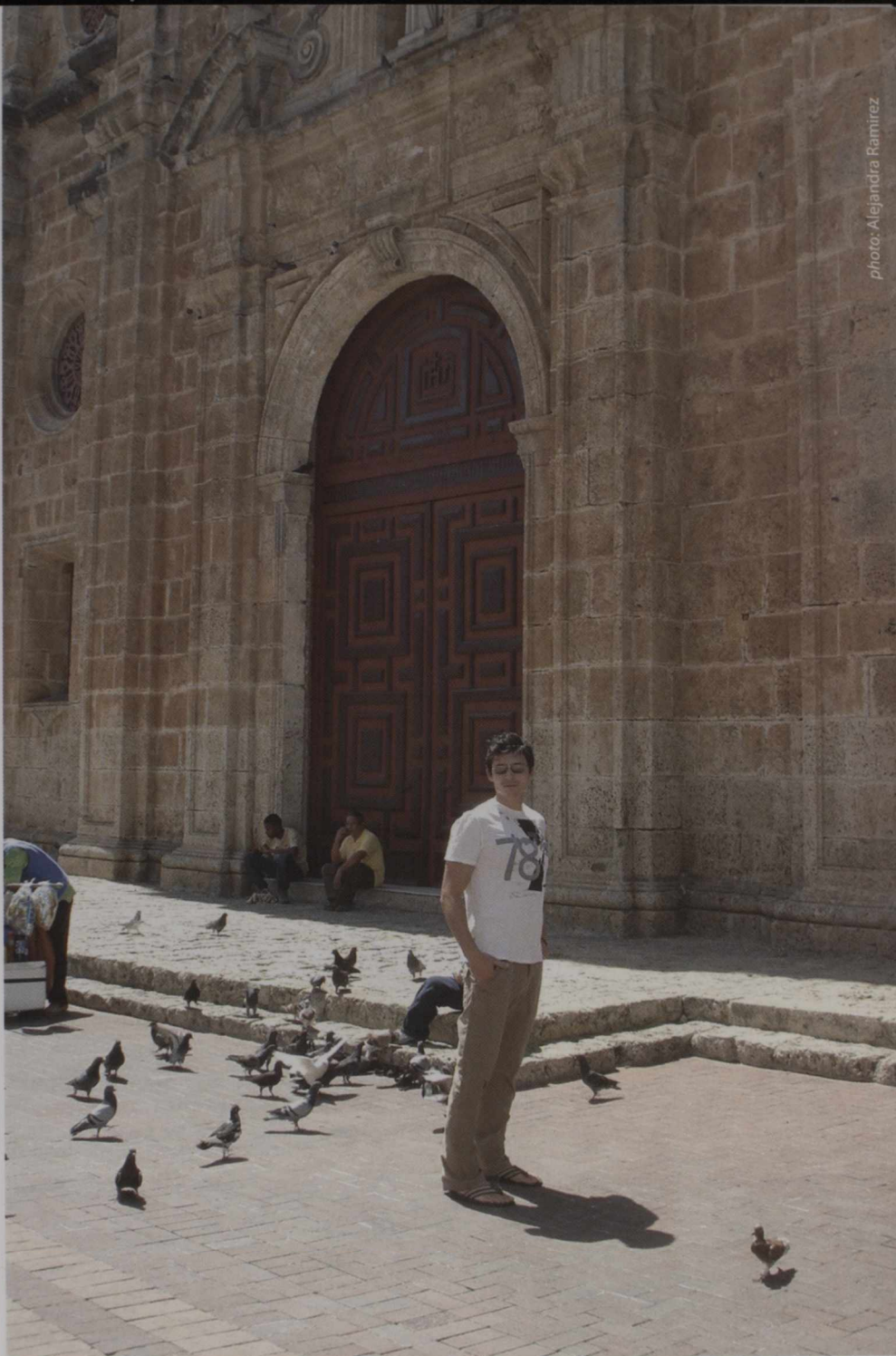


photo: Alejandra Ramirez

Claudio Ramirez outside a church in Cartagena, Colombia

of the Soviet Union in 1991, but she remembers fondly the affection of her extended family. At 11, she came with her mother to Canada in search of a better life. "I knew only that we were leaving loved ones behind and moving to a new country and—I hoped—an exciting new beginning."

And so it proved. She came to see Canada as a supportive place where advancement is as open to newcomers as to anyone else. Her passion for travel and exploring different cultures led her to studies in international relations and on to work at DFAIT.

Yelena now plays a role in ensuring that Canadian travellers are well informed and are able to ensure their safety abroad. She offers the same kind of helping hand that she and her mother received many years ago. For her as for others, a circle has been closed.