

TEENS: SO YOU'RE HEADING HOME AND FEELING APPREHENSIVE

by Laurel Pardy

This article was excerpted from a booklet entitled *Life on a Carousel* which is available in the *Posting Services Centre* and which is being given out to families returning to Ottawa, as part of the re-entry packet.

Canada: does it really seem like home? Do you remember the smell of a fall morning, or the excitement of the first snowfall? Can you recall your friends' faces, your school, your street? What will the other kids be wearing the first day of school? What will they know that you don't know? What will they think of you?

Don't feel alone with your worries. The adults share many of the same feelings, but they think they mustn't show it.

You may wonder why your parents are so eager to go home. Be patient. Soon they will find out that their memories have inaccuracies, too.

You will feel more in control of the situation if you take charge of some of the posting activities.

Education: Make sure that you have official records from the school/s you have attended while abroad, along with course descriptions, supporting evidence of extra credits taken, especially in French/English and Canadian Studies.

Get your immunization booklet updated as proof of immunization is mandatory for all baby shots, mumps, measles and polio.

Employment: Get proof of any part time, volunteer, or term work that you have done. Get references or addresses if applicable.

Packing Up: Pack up a box of your own special things so that they won't get lost. Take part in the process of sorting, buying, wrapping; don't let it all be done for you.

Taking Leave: This has been an important part of your youth; these are experiences that you will remember all your life. They have been an important part of years that have been full of change: your physical and social skills have become more mature; you have begun developing the philosophy that will carry you through adulthood.

How you handle the transition from post to home will be a vital part of that experience. It is important that you take the time to properly say good-bye to all your friends and teachers even though it will be difficult. If you don't say good-bye, you will always feel that somehow you should have, and then you will feel guilty as well as sad.

Take time to exchange pictures, buy a yearbook, get autographs, write down addresses and telephone numbers, throw a farewell party; buy souvenirs; take photos, pick up some brochures and make a few of those planned but never taken excursions.

Looking Ahead: So much for looking back — accept that you are really leaving and look forward. This is the time to re-new contact with old friends, with relatives and neighbours. If you think you might be in a position to take a job, write to potential employers with your *resumé* and an application letter.

Prepare yourself for Ottawa-Hull. The more you can reduce the gap between what you imagine and what you know, the fewer problems you will have. Look at the pictures from home; read up on Ottawa-Hull and Canadian life; get some magazines from home to find out what is being worn, what the concerns are, what music is popular and the names of the groups; find out what the current trends are re: dating, academic standards, drugs, alcohol and sex. Think about how you feel about these things because you will have to make some decisions. Obtain information about school-credits, course offerings, number and size of classes, placement options.

Talk to Your Parents: Your parents are having some of the same feelings even though they may seem too busy to care to talk. Express your anxieties, resentments and mixed feelings. Begin to discuss the cultural differences, attitudes, personal freedom, change in status and loss of servants. Begin practising more independence in making decisions.

Participate in the farewell activities. Keep active until your departure. Don't withdraw too soon. It is easy to mentally leave six months before your flight leaves.

It's an intimidating thought, but you will have to remake old friends and make totally new ones. Smile, proceed slowly, don't talk about your life abroad, and don't make comparisons, except to your immediate family. Once back home, get involved in activities outside of school classes — sports, music, drama. Sharing common interests with others is the fastest way into a new circle of social acquaintances. Be prepared to feel sad, on your own and "out of step". That is normal and it will pass. Time is your greatest ally; so, take your time, and give it time. Canada is not Utopia. Moving will not solve your problems, but it does offer an opportunity for a fresh start.

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"During the 1980s, more and more people are discovering that if they want the finest quality recordings for children, the place to go is Canada," so says Alan Gould, a freelance Canadian writer.

Much of the credit, he feels, must go to Raffi, the 35 year old Cairo born, Canadian ex-folksinger who has sold over 600 000 children's albums in Canada alone.

"Raffi is the Elvis of kids' records," says Hy Sarick, the owner of The Children's Bookstore in Toronto.

When he and his wife opened their store in 1977 they couldn't find a single distributor to sell them good quality children's records. Consequently, when Raffi drove up with a pile of records in the back seat of his car (on his own Troubadour label), Hy Sarick eagerly took a few to sell. "It was," he says, "like getting into Xerox at a buck a share."

If Raffi is Elvis, then the Mamas and Pappas must be Sharon, Lois and Bram. Their lively, joyful albums have all gone either gold or platinum shortly after their release. There are many others whose sales are not necessarily in the same league but whose talents certainly are, such as Fred Penner, Bob Schneider, Sandra Beech, Jerry Brodey, Natalie Simard and Suzanne Pinel.

The unique aspect about children's records too, is that every year or two there is a new generation of toe-tappers whose parents want the best for them.

"Raffi sells another 20 000 of each of his records every year," says Hy Sarick. "That's the nice thing about kids' albums — there's no finite shelf time."

For rotational families, the nice thing about children's albums is that they are light, compact, easily transportable and can help our children keep in touch with Canadian culture.