

Newsletter 11

Immigrants are like trees, and this is no a knicker fetish!

Immigrants are like trees.



[Plant a tree 73](#), was a government initiative in UK which encouraged the population to plant trees as a virulent strain of Dutch Elm disease was sweeping the country killing millions of trees.

I planted a willow sapling in our school grounds. It was less than a metre high when I planted it, but I was glad to see that when I visited the school twenty-odd years later, my eleven-year-old effort of a daily bucket of water had paid off. My willow tree was strong and although lop-sided, towered over me. The tree had bushy leaves and I imagine strong roots. Perhaps the lopsidedness

was from a setback such as a storm or a student jumping on it. I was pleased to see it looked strong in its mature form.

Sophia, originally from China, suggested migration is similar to transplanting a tree. A sapling can be easily transplanted, however a mature tree needs care and attention for successful transplanting. An adult tree may need to leave behind some of its deeper roots. When transplanting a mature tree you may need to trim off some of the foliage and branches so that the tree can focus its energy on growing healthy and stable roots in the ground. It needs help to become settled.

As migrants are 'transplanted', we may need to trim some of our relationships so that we can find a sense of belonging (roots) in the country or place we have chosen to live. I mentioned this in my book. Below is an excerpt.

"New immigrants tend to find they contact many people frequently. When Olivia first arrived in her adopted country, she would spend a whole weekend phoning and emailing friends and family. 'In the beginning my weekend was structured to call this person then that person. I found that I was living inside all weekend; I was living my life in the USA. I wasn't living my life here. I wasn't out making friends, I wasn't out doing anything like seeing the country, joining clubs. I was only going to work and the gym. I found that all my free time was spent catching up with people: "Don't forget me, I'm still here." I would go through this calling list of everyone and then get hold of my family, then other people there too. With my job, I was travelling and meeting people. I may be away for four days and the last thing I wanted to do on a Saturday was to spend the day on the phone. I didn't want my life to be about work and calling people in the States. You get to think, that is not a life.' Realising she had to decrease the amount of time spent contacting people in the States, Olivia reduced calls to her friends to perhaps once a month, and rang family at set intervals. This has made the amount of contact work well for her. It did mean she had to let go of some of her old friends, or reduce the intensity of the contact, but it gave her room to make friends in her adopted country."

From Chapter 5 Keep in touch or else! "[The Emotional Challenges of Immigration, Strategies and stories of those who stayed](#),"

This is not a knicker fetish

Why do I keep buying M&S Knickers?



I don't have an underwear fetish, but as my lingerie drawer contents is looking more like 'lingertoolong' underwear, my thought process jumps to - need more M&S knickers, about time I went to M&S, England.

I hear you cry, 'Why not buy online!' I have done previously, but there comes a time when the sad knickers are a daily reminder that it has been too long since I have been to England to see family, friends and (stock up on knickers.) There is more to underwear than meets the eye.

Yes I can buy them online, but then buying them will allow me to put off making decisions for a trip that I know I need to do anyway.

My underwear may not be the dictator of my homeland trip but it is definitely a mark in time. Its been long enough since the last visit.

But why do I need to revert to M&S knickers when there are perfectly adequate ones here in New Zealand? Before I start to theorise, I take comfort in that I am not alone. A New Zealander once said that although they have loved working in London for the last few years, when they visit family in NZ, restocking on Bendon, their favourite brand of NZ underwear is a high priority.

So why is familiar underwear so precious to us? We are creatures of habit, intrepid explorers, prepared to give up friends, family and familiarity of our homeland, but when it comes to the

garments most intimate with us, only the most familiar will do. Perhaps as migrants we feel we have changed and adapted enough, that having to find another underwear that fits and is comfortable is just one change too many.

Fashion gurus, stylists and underwear salespeople will tell you that with great underwear, you will feel great. So maybe with familiar underwear, the underwear of our formative years, we can feel a familiarity. Outwardly we appear to be fully acclimatised to our new environment, whereas secretly in an undercover-underwear kind of way we are holding onto a piece of our previous life. On a daily basis the underclothes give us secret comfort. Be ready M&S a bulk purchase is coming up.

More welcoming groups



Last week I was a guest speaker at the [Newcomers Network](#) national conference. This is an organisation run mainly by volunteers which mission is to, “assist newcomers to settle into their new community whilst having fun and making new friends.”

The groups are located in the towns and cities of New Zealand and are run by volunteer co-ordinators. Most of the co-ordinators are migrants themselves and have a wish to help migrants become more settled. The network offers many events throughout the month, a picnic, a book group, a walking group. These events provide a place for newcomers to meet people, converse with like minds and learn more about the idiosyncrasies of the country and the area they are living in.

I highly recommend that you seek out a similar network to increase your meaningful social engagements. If there is not one in your area, perhaps you could consider starting one. An advert in a local paper may be a good start. There may be funding available to help you with some costs as governments usually like to help migrants become more settled. Have a look at this website for ideas. <http://www.newcomers.co.nz/>

Other info.



I have written a series of blogs on making goodbyes easier. I have collated all of them in [this blog](#). It was interesting that when I recently said goodbye to my son who came back to NZ from London for a week to be part of my mother-in-law's funeral, my goodbye may have been easier, but it was still hard and that was okay. It is the pain of loving. At the airport departure gate, my daughter and I matched my son's brave cheery wave. When he was out of sight we held each other tight and cried.

I have added an introduction video to my blog. For those who enjoy talking heads you can watch it [here](#).

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