



More Time for Life

By Mark Calzavara,
Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph

Adriana Dominguez was a fast-rising executive in Mexico City's insurance industry when she met and fell in love with her husband Joel Painchaud. A confessed workaholic, Dominguez would put in 13-hour days before sitting down to dinner with her parents at 10 p.m. each night. Much has changed for her since moving here five years ago. After leaving behind her blossoming career and, more importantly for her, a tightly knit family life, Dominguez has come to appreciate Quebec for what it is and what it is not. "We decided to live here because we thought we would have a better quality of life," she says, "and we found it."



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Dominguez made several trips to Quebec City before immigrating. She discovered, to her surprise, a widespread willingness on the part of Quebecers to try to speak to her in Spanish. "The people were very friendly to me and I totally fell in love with the old city; I even loved the snow!" Dominguez says.

Six months into her new life, Dominguez hit hard up against the reality that so many new immigrants find in Quebec. Isolation. Language barriers. Difficulty finding suitable employment.

"I was crying all the time. I told my husband, 'I can't stay here, it's too hard,'" she says. Such a marked change in the demeanour of his normally optimistic and vivacious wife was a clarion call for her husband. "He said to me, 'I didn't bring you here to be sad all the time, we will move back to Mexico if you want.' That offer plus the moral support he was giving me convinced me to give it some more time. It was so tough for me; I can't imagine how hard it is for immigrant couples or singles who come here without somebody to support them," she says.

Through a friend, Dominguez learned of a Quebec City program that placed newcomers with local companies for experience and language help. She was accepted but her placement was a real challenge to her pride. "I was managing 12 people when I left my job in Mexico, and here my boss was asking me to make him coffee and open his windows for him," she says, still clearly offended.

From that unhappy experience she moved on to a data entry position in the same company as her husband. She soon became the accounts receivable manager. After a further nine months of working in French and developing much stronger language skills, she managed to jump back into the insurance industry as an entry-level administrative assistant.

Now, Dominguez works on projects in Toronto, Montreal and Quebec City and just last week received a promotion. "After five years here though, my career is still not back to the level that it was in Mexico," she says.

Getting used to the speed of life here has been a challenge for Dominguez. "Mexico City is a very fast-paced environment. Quebec City feels like living in the countryside for me," she says laughing. Dominguez and her husband work 35 hours a week and eat dinner at 5:30 instead of 10 p.m. They spend much of their free time entertaining family and friends in their new home and are hoping for a baby in the future. "I have more time here for life," she says. "That was a big surprise for me. I would tell that to any newcomer. The beginning is really tough but if you hang in, you will come to enjoy life here."

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