

Elaine interviewing Elodie Brunel and Gwenolé Benech

Elodie: It was a decision made because we wanted to live abroad since a long time, so it was our decision. We left on our own. We made all the things we had to do to have the papers. So it was really important for us to have an experience abroad and we stayed for a little bit more than 3 years.

Elaine: Whereabouts?

Elodie: We were in the Toronto area in Ontario, Canada.

Elaine: And you took your three children?

Elodie: Yes. We have three children. They were 8, 12 and 14 at that time.

Elaine: And, Gwenolé you, I gather, have also travelled out of Brittany, France. Where did you go to?

Gwenolé: I went to London because of the professional opportunities for my wife who worked for the French Embassy and we went to London for 2 years, in 2017 to 2019, before the Covid crisis and I was off my profession and I take care about logistics and children. I've got 2 children who was 7 and 8. They were very excited to move abroad - it was a new adventure. We lived in Earls Court and the school was in Fulham and we went to school by subway and scooter. We didn't want to live in a French community. We wanted to live in an English one. It was very important to live in this area of our school because it's a hub we've got - subway, buses. There were a lot of parks and museums. We've got a chance in London because museums are free. London is made for children. We've got a lot of parks, playgrounds, museums. It's a good experience.

Elaine: Elodie. How did this move benefit your family? What were the positive points to come out of it?

Elodie: I generally said we also didn't want to stay with French but we wanted to be fully integrated. That's why we decided to place our children into the Canadian schools, not in the French school. This is part of the benefit because even if we decided to place them into French-speaking schools because in Canada in Ontario you have two different kinds of schools - the French-speaking and the English-speaking schools - we decided to place them into the French-speaking schools but even in the French-speaking schools most of the children speak English at home. Within the class it's in French but outside of the class it's all in English. It seems to me the biggest benefit is the language because of the immersion. When you are immersed into the language you learn it.



Elaine: Gwenolé - was that the same for your family?

Gwenolé: Yes. I totally agree with Elodie. I think the good point is the language. I know it was difficult at the first time but they get the vocabulary, the accent. It's not very obvious for us when we went to London but for the children it was very easy and I agree with Elodie they were in French school but English lessons was totally in English. It was forbidden to speak in French and the activities were in English - everything was in English so it was very easy for them to learn and to get the accent and everything they could take in English.

Elaine: So what advice would you give to other families who might be considering moving from France for perhaps a year or two or more?

Gwenolé: Ah! I think it was a good experience. We have to take that as a good experience and most for children to have to get a new language to get a new culture environment and it was very important for them to get all this package.

Elaine: Elodie. Maybe the last word - would you recommend people perhaps?

Elodie: Absolutely. Even if we did it during the time of Covid in Canada we were separated from our family which was very hard and coming back was really hard as well because we all had to have a negative test to catch the 'plane which was my nightmare because I said "Oh my gosh, my gosh if someone tests positive what will we do?" But it's definitely an amazing experience. So I don't know for London. I would love to live in London that's for sure but in Toronto it's one of the benefits as well that it's a multi-cultural part of Canada. We met people from everywhere. We ate food from everywhere which is so great and so it's really a very good experience. And my advice, though, is to be prepared and to prepare everything in advance and to think about what will be the problems you could expect - even if you can't obviously imagine all the problems or all the benefits be prepared and I didn't work at that time as well. Generally, I was really focused on the children; to see if they were well. The children, they are also very happy with the experience and they realise, obviously with the English, but with all the other things that they've learned so much things in such a short amount of time.

Elaine: Thank you.

Elodie: Thank you so much.

Gwenolé: Thank you.