

Lorelei and Rosalind Silverman

[Start of recorded material]

Rosalind: [01:00:04:02] My name is Rosalind Silverman.

Lorelei: [01:00:05:23] And I am Lorelei Silverman.

Rosalind: [01:00:08:03] We came to Canada in 1996 from Romania.

On life in Romania

Lorelei: [01:00:18:19] Romania used to be a communist country and we lived most of our lives in a communist country. However, in 1989, Romania went through a revolution and the past six years prior to coming to Canada, we lived in a society that was transitioning towards democracy.

[01:00:45:09] Romania is a diverse, very cultural society, where the education is highly regarded. Growing up in this environment, we pursued our education in Bucharest, the city we come from, and got a Master's of Science in biology.

Rosalind: [01:01:14:08] From an economical point of view, Romania during the communism endured a lot of hardship and so did the population that lived in that country. But after the revolution, the economy transitioned towards integrating in the European system and things looked much better.

Choosing Canada

Lorelei: [01:01:39:04] We decided to come to Canada in 1995. So after finishing our university and receiving a Master's of Science, we worked for a biotechnological company producing anti-cancer drugs. And at some point we were under the impression that outside of Romania there were more opportunities for pursuing our academic interests and also for contributing to scientific research.

[01:02:12:06] So we looked around and decided that one of the countries that can offer such opportunities is Canada.

Rosalind: [01:02:22:14] One of the reasons we decided to come, in our family, my father visited Canada in 1988, just before the Romanian revolution for the Genetics Congress; he was a university professor back home. And when he returned, nobody actually expected him to return, they thought he would remain in the western countries.

[01:02:47:02] He said that if he would have had a second life, he would have liked to live in Canada because it's actually a very beautiful country and the people are very welcoming.

First impressions

Lorelei: [01:03:01:00] We fell in love with Toronto, we really like all the skyscrapers and the North American society, and buildings, the lake, everything that the city had to offer. However, the excitement was also mixed with feelings of fear for the future because we had to establish a new life; we had to start over, not only for finding a job and finding new friends, but also to try to integrate in a new society.

Rosalind: [01:03:39:07] Basically, we took each and every street, north-south, east-west, entered in each and every museum. By the time most of them had one free day, so we basically chose what day it was free and went to each of them. We also tried to make many friends and attended many festivals of different populations. Every week it was another ethnic festival which amazed us.

[01:04:07:01] We came from a society where we had minorities but not so many, but here it was really a multicultural city and this was a part of its flavour that attracted us a lot.

On hardships and challenges

Lorelei: [01:04:24:06] When we arrived in Canada, we thought that we'd land a job immediately because on the points system in Canada, our job which was a geneticist, was ranked the highest. So we were afraid that we'd get a job and we wouldn't have a Social Insurance Number because it takes about three weeks to get after you apply. We were worried that we'd get a job before receiving the Social Insurance Number.

[01:04:59:19] However, the reality was different. Soon, we realized that we needed Canadian experience. We have to prove here in Canada that we are able to contribute to the society. We needed to understand the job market; we needed to understand how to find a job.

Rosalind: [01:05:25:15] As many other newcomers, we also faced the difficulties of finding a place and actually opening a bank account, because you needed three pieces of identification with your picture, which we did not have. We had trouble as cheques that could not be cashed.

[01:05:45:18] We went to rent an apartment but they needed somebody to co-sign because we had no credit history in Canada. We had problems with the food here in Canada because it was different than back home. The transportation system... learning each and every piece, it's new and makes up part of the daily life.

On becoming Canadian

Lorelei: [01:06:15:20] One of the major landmarks of becoming Canadian was when we received our citizenship. After three years, you are actually eligible to apply for citizenship and we did it right away. The very first

day that we were able, we applied. After one year we went for the interview.

[01:06:41:17] The day that we received the citizenship, the celebration was one of our happiest moment in our life in Canada. We were extremely proud of receiving the citizenship. When we received our passport, we travelled with a lot of pride all over the world. Showing our Canadian passport, we were always excited to be called Canadian citizens at the border.

Rosalind: **[01:07:23:03]** To become Canadian or to feel Canadian, is a process both ways. In one way, you get to know more about the society, you get to know more Canadian people. But at the same time, there is the other process in which you start to contribute to the Canadian society. So the more you also give back to other people, to your community, to your work, the more you feel that you are part of this community.
[01:07:52:10]

[End of recorded material]

Dr. Lorelei Silverman and Dr. Rosalind Silverman currently work as scientific researchers in the University of Toronto's Faculty of Medicine. They received the Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Award in 2009.