

Permanent Residency: Cynthia Sappracone

As I did every Friday afternoon, I checked the mail on my way home from work. I turned the key in the lock. I opened the mailbox. Inside was a letter addressed to me from the Australian government.

Could it be what I hoped it would be? I wondered. I slid my index finger underneath the envelope flap. I tore it open. Anxious to read the letter's contents, I unfolded a single sheet of A4 paper. I scanned the text in anticipation of two words: Permanent Residency. *Yes!* I thought. *Finally!*

Immigrating to Australia has been a tale of new beginnings. I arrived here a married woman, having tied the knot in an intimate ceremony only two days earlier. A suitcase, a heart full of hope and a spirit seeking adventure were the only things I took with me for the long flight to Sydney.

Settling in with my husband and best friend in the Northern Beaches, it didn't take long for me to fall in love with the nation's laid back lifestyle and change my drip coffee for an oat milk cappuccino.

While a part of me yearned to hold on to my heritage and traditions, I also wanted to make those of Australia my own. How do I go about doing that? And in doing so, do I risk losing myself in the process?

Two years later, I can proudly say that I call Australia home. Starting a new life in the land down under has had its challenges - especially when three-quarters of that time has been spent in a global pandemic. But it's also been such a privilege. How many people get the chance to see the world with new eyes? To rekindle that sense of child-like wonder? To be in a renewed awe of the sights and sights around them?

The next day, I shared the happy news with my colleagues. 'You're Australian now,' they cheered.

I'm Australian now, I repeat in my head, still not believing it's actually true. *I'm Australian now.*

Is that it? Does a piece of paper make me Australian? Or is it something more? Will I ever know?

'Now, if only I could get rid of my Canadian accent' I smile. 'Don't,' they exclaim.

'You'd be losing a part of who you are!'