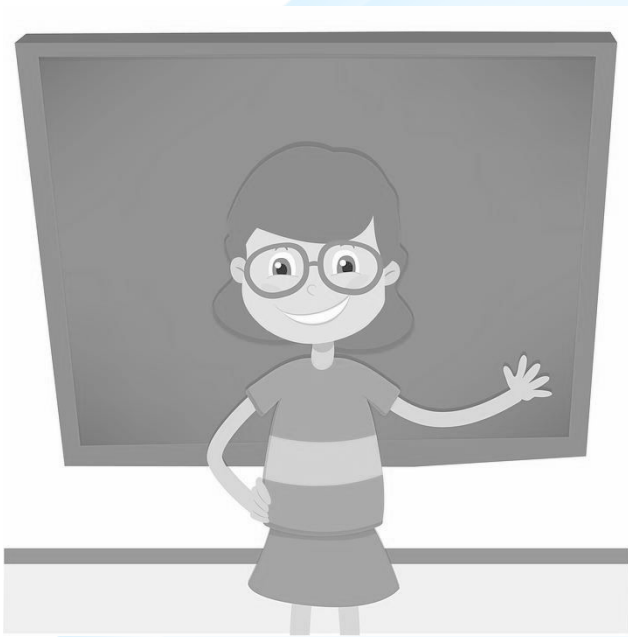


Bursting the Suburban Bubble



By Allison Little



I grew up in Burlington, Ontario- a nice suburban town in a middle class family. Everyone around looked and sounded the same as me. The biggest decision of my early adulthood life was deciding if I wanted to be a teacher or if I wanted to work in the hotel industry. At the time, I was working at a summer camp and a hotel. I realized I enjoyed working with children much more than adults so I chose teaching.



I met my husband in university. He grew up in the same home town as me and was going to school to become a teacher as well. We eventually moved in together and were happy but neither of us really felt fulfilled. Life in Burlington was just too easy and familiar.



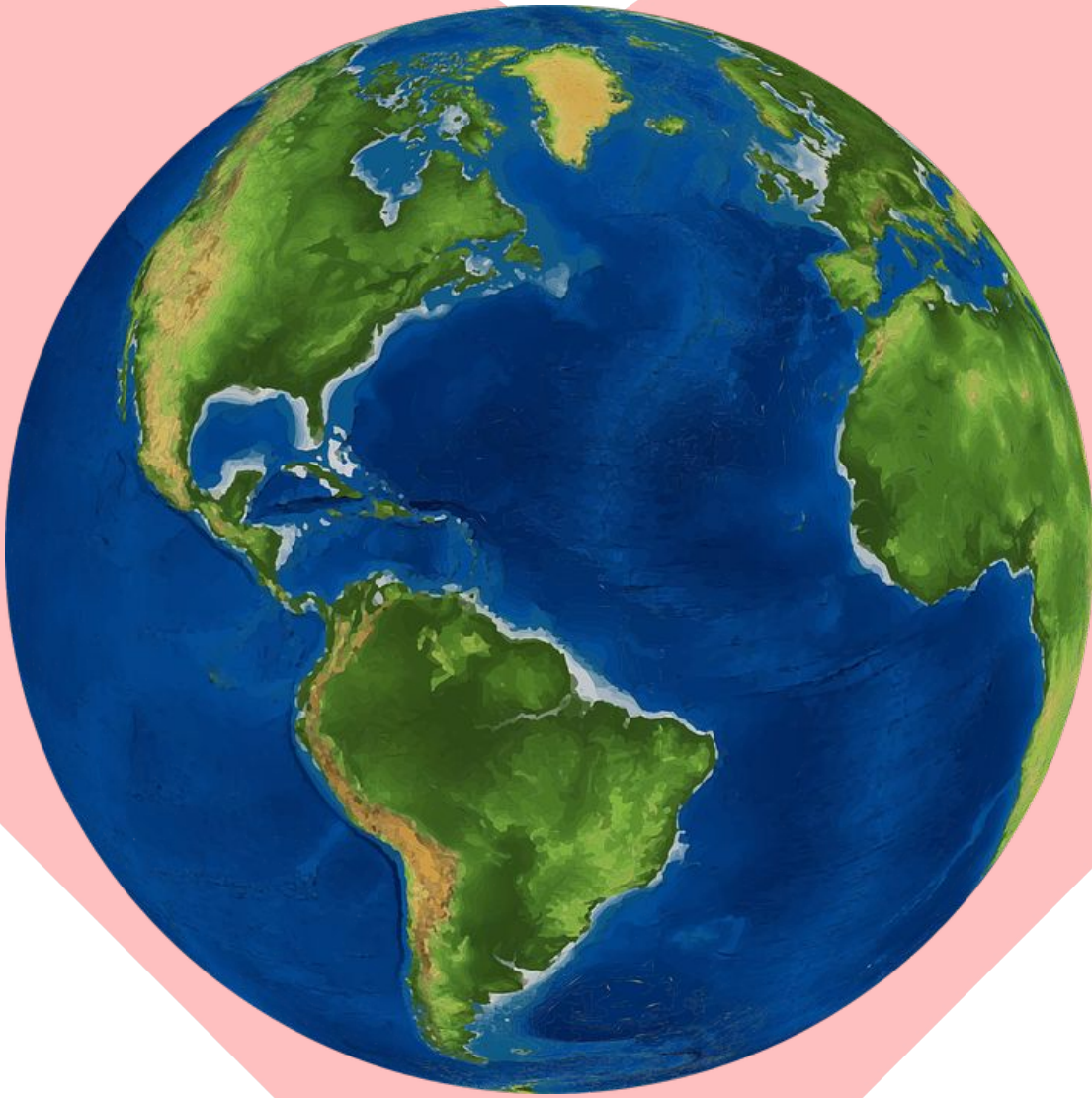
So, we decided to move across the world to China to teach. This was by far the biggest life change and that's when our bubble really burst. We met so many different people from all over the world who had such different life experiences than we had. We began to really appreciate growing up in Canada and also realized how easy and privileged our lives were (and are). Here we are eating dinner at a restaurant shortly after arriving in China.



After 5 years teaching in China and traveling around south-east Asia, it was time to move on. So, we moved across the border to Hong Kong. This is where I really blossomed as a teacher. I learned from wonderful experienced colleagues and taught students from all over the world. Each of them were truly global citizens.



Although we loved life in Hong Kong and the expatriate life, I felt incomplete. We really wanted to start a family but needed some medical intervention which we couldn't get in Hong Kong. So, we moved back to Burlington and with the help of some great doctors, I was finally able to grow a little human. His name is Sam and he's my world.



So now comes the next chapter of our lives. We want Sam to grow up as a global citizen, a third culture kid. We want him to love Canada and appreciate everything we have here, but we also want him to have a greater understanding of others and of different cultures. So, we're moving back to Hong Kong in July!

Allison Little

Growing up, I never really realized how easy I had it. I had two parents who loved each other and showed affection daily. We went on trips, lived in a great house with a pool and never had to make sacrifices. I had many friends who all looked the same and whose experiences mirrored mine. I got into the university of my choosing, met a great life partner and was able to secure the job of my choice.

However, I knew that there had to be more out there. I wanted to be challenged, experience different cultures, and see more of the world. Cue- Asia.

Living in China and Hong Kong definitely ticked all the boxes. My time living in a suburban bubble burst. I was challenged to learn how to communicate in different languages, I lived in cultures so very different from mine, and I was able to travel to many different countries and meet different people. I made new friends, most of whom did not look like me and whose life experiences varied greatly from mine. I loved listening to their life stories and it really put into perspective how privileged I was growing up in Burlington.

During this time, I also grew as a teacher. I was able to learn from my colleagues who had taught all over the world. I took professional development courses in New York City, Bangkok, and Kota Kinabalu. I taught students from many different countries and it was incredible to see how they respected and appreciated each other's differences.

I think I would have stayed in Asia forever except that we really wanted to start a family. So, we moved back to Burlington and I began teaching at a private school in Oakville. This was a very different experience than I'd had overseas. I finally got pregnant and had a beautiful baby boy named Sam. I started my masters so that I could continue to grow as a teacher.

However, after our bubble popped, we realized that we couldn't put it back together and we don't want to. We love Canada, love being Canadian but we want Sam to grow up as an international kid. So, we're going back to Hong Kong in July so that we can share the world with our little one.