

In sixth grade, life as I knew it completely changed. When my dad broke the news that we were moving to Canada I didn't know what to think. Up until that point, I associated Canada with hockey and cold weather. Living in a small town in Pennsylvania my whole life made it impossible for me to fully anticipate what big a transition this would be.

Although I knew there would be some challenges with moving, one I did not expect was that I would be a minority because I was from a different country. Because my accent and clothes were different, I would get made fun of a lot. The bullying got so bad that I actually ended up switching schools. Although this was not the warm welcome I was hoping for, this experience motivated me to learn French and to not give up making new friends.

The language barrier made it hard to connect with my peers, even at my new school, so I decided to really step it up. I came in early to school to study French, having to wake up at 5:30 in the morning to catch the subway. Additionally, after school before I had practice, I would visit my teacher again to review what we did that day. I went from a 30 out of 100 on my first test to making the Honor Roll program and receiving a B in French.

Another big adjustment was learning to navigate Toronto's public transportation system. In order to get to my new school, I had to take two public buses, the train, and the streetcar. I'll never forget that feeling when I completed the commute the first time by myself. The sense of freedom was invigorating, but I knew this freedom came with responsibility. After my winter mid terms, I remember going to McDonald's all by myself on the way home. This was the first time I went to a restaurant without adult supervision and I loved it, especially when I ordered two Big Macs without being told no. Throughout my travels I learned to be efficient and to always be aware of my surroundings especially after the first time I fell asleep on the train, missed my stop and woke up ten stops later. My morning routine always included reading and in the afternoon I would do homework.

As soon as I was getting used to Canada, my Dad announced we were moving back to the US. Although I felt upset at first, my one year there taught me more about myself than the previous twelve years. Instead of being intimidated of another big move, I was excited about it. I was ready for the challenge and approached it with an open mind. Once I moved back to the States, I used the skills I learned in Canada (being friendly, positive, and outgoing) to help with this transition, especially when it came to making friends. Living in Toronto not only taught me a lot about myself, but introduced me to the French culture which is still an important part of my life today.