

# Children's Bridge

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION CONSULTANTS



making families happen

## Meet CB's new Executive Director: Karyn Bakelaar

I was first introduced to The Children's Bridge and Cathy Murphy in 2008, when I was asked to speak at AdoptTALK to a group of waiting families who were waiting to adopt from South Africa. I had spent a fair bit of time in South Africa by that point, after traveling and volunteering there for 6-months with my daughter in 2001-2002.

Our time spent in South Africa eventually led to the adoption of our middle son, Thabiso, in 2002. In 2007, we completed the adoption of our youngest son from South Africa, and Cathy had asked if I would come and speak to waiting families about our experiences. Six months later, I began my career at *The Children's Bridge*, first as an Adoption Program Manager for Ethiopia and Jamaica, and eventually this led to co-presenting AdoptTALK, managing various country programs, creating our HIV+ Kids Adoption Program, and completing the licensing process that led to the creation of many new programs at TCB. I enjoyed every minute of being part of a team that worked with such passion and dedication in so many areas - over the years I have seen the TCB staff and Board of Director's work tirelessly in advocating for waiting families, assisting with pre and post-adoption supports and resources, and never fail in their commitment and dedication to the children that are placed in adoptive families, and to the ones who would remain in their countries of birth.

By the end of 2008, I was working at TCB three days/week and had also completed an undergraduate degree



*Darian, Karyn, Khosi and Thabiso enjoying a birthday lunch in Ottawa.*

through the *University of Ottawa* in International Development and Globalization, minoring in Political Science. Cathy was promoted to the role of Executive Director at *The Children's Bridge*, and for the next 9-years we all continued to work closely as a staff team. As those of you who are reading this can attest to, international adoption is not for the

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faint of heart, and working in international adoption is no exception to this. The landscape changes quickly, and requires those who work in the field to remain flexible, creative, compassionate and to be constantly aware of upcoming changes (as much as humanly possible). I am proud to say the TCB team (including our hard-working Board of Directors) continued to do just this when faced with many challenging situations over the past ten years.

In 2015, I began graduate school at Carleton University, and will graduate this Fall with a *Masters in Law/Legal Studies* with a *Specialization in African Studies*. One aspect I had always loved about working at TCB is the extremely supportive atmosphere we work under, which was always led by Cathy and upheld by the rest of the team. It would have been impossible for me to complete graduate school while working and parenting three children without this type of atmosphere, and it is one that I plan to carry forward in my new role as Executive Director.

As of July 2nd, 2018, I accepted the role as Executive Director of The Children's Bridge - a role that I am extremely excited to take on. Cathy has left big shoes to fill, but our team remains strong and our dedication and commitment to the children and families we advocate for remains unwavering. I look forward to working with you all in this new capacity, and if I have not yet met you, please feel free to send me an email to say hello!



**Karyn Bakelaar**

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- Executive Director
- Government Relations
- Intercountry Relations
- Program Manager: Zambia, Florida, India, and HIV
- Pre and Post Adoption Education and Services

\*\*\*While I am currently continuing to work remotely from South Africa, I will be back in the Ottawa office the week of September 10th.



# Welcome

## SOUTH KOREA

*Welcome Home from South Korea to:*

Hyeon Grace, born January 26th, 2017, daughter of Mike and Laura, Barrie

YunSeul Reuben, born January 5th, 2017, son of Brad and Erin, Ottawa.

## THAILAND

**Arrived June 30th, 2018 from Kanthong Children's Home, Khon Kaen Province, Thailand:**

Maxwell Khwanphithak, son to Matthew and Jeanette from Mississauga, Ontario

## INDIA

**Congratulations** to Sarah and Lucas who welcomed daughter, Meena from India.

**Congratulations** to Shereeni, who welcomed daughter Sukanti from India.

# Our Thailand Trip

By Jeanette & Matthew Milnes

You have been waiting years for that call, but nothing really prepares you for it. It was March 21, 2018 when Darlene gave us that call. We have finally been matched with a beautiful 4 year old boy, living in Khon Kaen Children's home, whom we have named Maxwell (Max for short). It truly is hard to describe the feelings you have when you receive that call. There is a sense of overwhelming excitement, nervousness, elation but most of all happiness, tears of joy were definitely shed. We must've read his proposal a dozen times over and stared at his picture for long periods of time. It was a definite "Yes" from us.

The next step is to officially accept Max. We had to first make an appointment with a physician to go over his file and answer any questions or concerns with regards to his medical profile. We also then had to make an appointment with our adoption practitioner who had to send our acceptance report to the ministry and write our acceptance letter to the DCY. In the interim of all these appointments Darlene had connected us with Penpimol (Pen). She is our Thailand representative. She was there to help co-ordinate our Thailand trip and plan our itinerary. She guided us in booking all necessary in-country Thailand flights and helped book our hotels and any necessary appointments. The first thing we needed to do though, was book our flight to and from Bangkok. Darlene was very helpful in coordinating this for us and referred us to Eastview Travel Agency; as Children's Bridge uses them quite frequently. Pen helped us with our in-country flight to and from Khon Kaen and suggested which flights were the best to take and she had also booked a driver for us to and from the airport at our request. She made some suggestions to some of the hotels in Khon Kaen and even researched them for us. It was wonderful to have someone do the work for you and she was great to deal with. Pen wanted to make this experience for us as stress free as possible.

After all the hotels and flights were booked, there was a sense of "realness" that this was actually going to happen. Excited nervousness came upon us and it was a mad dash to get Max's bedroom ready, buy him clothes and some toys to take with us to Thailand. We needed to book vacation time off work, and notify work of parental leave. We also started re-reading books and articles in what to expect when you bring your adopted child home. We wanted to be prepared for all scenarios.

Through all of this Pen kept in touch. She made sure we had all our necessary documents with us, she also provided us with recommendations of places to go and restaurants to eat at. She is a great source of information, and you could tell that she truly had a love for Thailand. Darlene had also given us a wealth of advice before our trip, which we gladly took, as they were things we never even thought of. **CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**





The day has finally arrived and we crossed our fingers that we had everything packed. All important documents in our carry on was double and triple checked. We were ready to leave. The 18 hour flight to Thailand was long, but we finally made it. We were greeted by Jade and Karn at the airport who were our in-country coordinators. Karn wanted to meet us and just say a quick "hello"; as she will be with us at all our appointments, and Jade is to accompany us with a driver to the hotel. A full bag in hand Jade had brought us more than enough snacks and drinks for our hotel room. He wanted to make sure we were comfortable. Jade was easy to talk to and helped guide us in getting our money exchanged and in getting our sim cards. Jade made sure that we had everything we needed and didn't leave our side until we were checked into the Bliston Suwan Park View hotel.

June 13, 2018 we were on our way to Khon Kaen to meet our son. From the airport we were greeted by one of the workers from Khon Kaen Children's Home, her name was Oh. She had brought us to our hotel the Pullman Khon Kaen Raja Orchid and made sure we were checked in. She then returned in the afternoon where she picked us up and brought us to meet our son and play with him for a couple of hours. Waiting in that playroom to meet our son felt the longest and we were a bundle of nervous excitement. Staring at the door, we then saw him approach us, we were met with the saddest eyes and a "sawadee krap" which is "hello" in Thai with the "wai" to show respect. During our time with him; we read him books, did a few



puzzles with him and played with some toys. Throughout interacting with him there was no reaction, no emotion and he seemed quite indifferent with playing with us. Perhaps he was just as nervous as we were. Before we knew it our time with him was up, and we were to come back the next day for more play time as he was not yet ready to leave with us. The next day came and to our surprise after some time and a little coaxing the little boy that we were playing with really opened up. Max was playing, laughing and running around like a 4 year old should. It was quite a different story from yesterday. Then to our delight, we were told that we could take him back to the hotel with us that day. We were finally a family united and our lives have now forever changed.

Back at the hotel we had noticed that Max kept staring out the window and realized that he had probably never had been up so high, been in a hotel room and has never overlooked a city. There were going to be many new experiences that we would get the opportunity to share with him. The language barrier between us was perhaps the toughest hurdle that we had. With our handy Thai speech app translator, our Thai dictionary and our Thai picture cheat sheet (recommended by Darlene) we did the best we could and along with a lot of pointing and hand gesturing we were able to communicate with him.

Our time in Khon Kaen had come to an end and we were to now fly back to Bangkok. We were curious of how Max was going to react in seeing and being on an airplane

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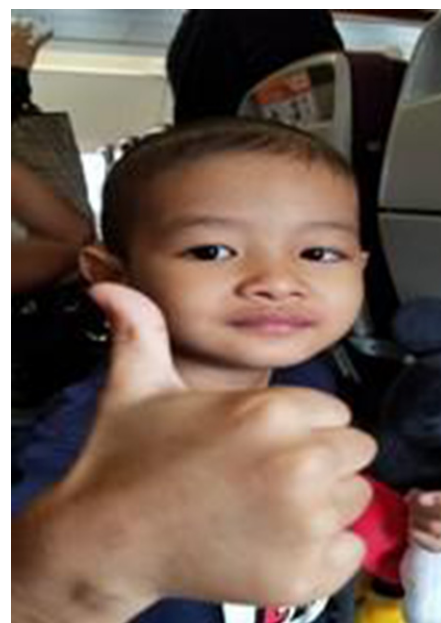
as we are assuming this is his first time. We had tried the best we could to prepare Max and let him know we were going on an airplane the night before. With his new Mickey Mouse friend in hand for comfort, we boarded the plane, and when we landed it was a "thumbs up" from Max when we asked him if he was OK.

The next couple of days were booked with appointments to the passport office where we met Khun Jane, the Canadian Embassy, BNH Hospital for Max's medical and then the interview with the adoption committee board. Karn had accompanied us to all our appointments and was able to translate and guide us in filling out the proper documents. Karn was very helpful throughout this whole process and having her there with us for all our appointments was comforting. She is a lovely person whom is easy to approach and talk to. It was beneficial to have her around as she was also able to translate what Max would commonly say to us in Thai.

During the waiting period for Max's VISA we had decided to stay in Bangkok and see what the city had to offer us. We were there during the rainy season and there were days we were spared from the blistering sun, as it was already hot and humid without it. One of the reasons why we chose to stay at the Bliston Suwan Park View hotel was because it is centrally located. We found the staff friendly and always willing to help, and our rooms were cleaned every day. The accommodations felt "homey" and it felt just like living in a single one bedroom apartment. There is also a pool, gym, two restaurants and a hair salon right at the hotel. Since the hotel was centrally located we walked to most places. It is a 4 minute walk to Mercury Ville, which is a shopping center that had mostly restaurants to eat at, a couple of pharmacies, and a convenient store. There were also pop up vendors there for other shopping requirements. We had done a lot of shopping since everything was accessible through the skywalk. We walked to Lumpini Park where Max enjoyed the kids playground.

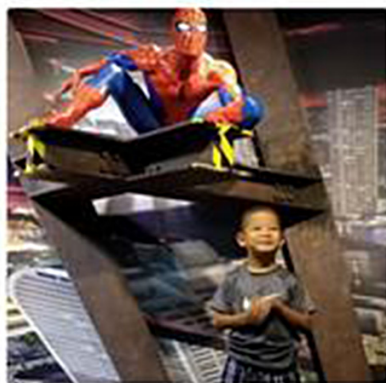
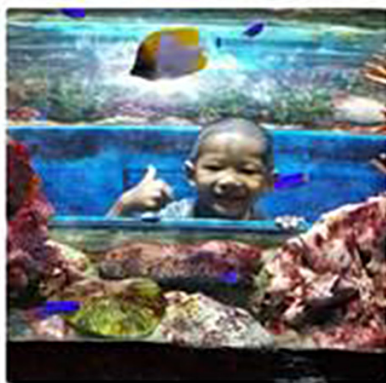
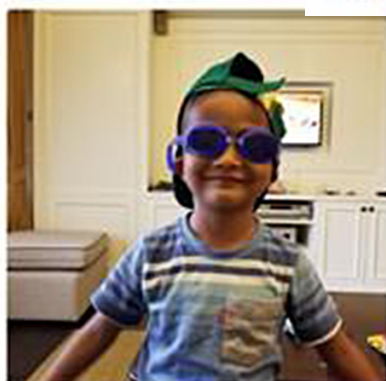
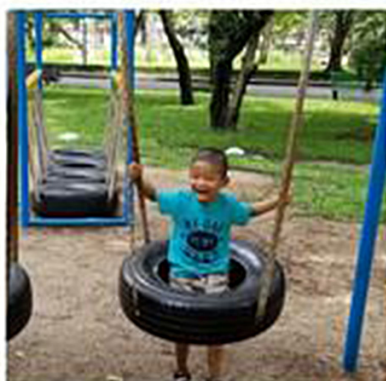
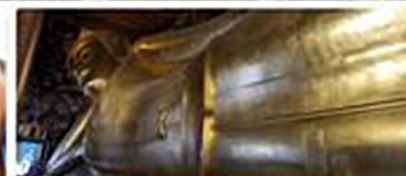
Through the hotel we had booked a private tour to see the Grand Palace, Wat Phra Kaew The temple of the Emerald Buddha, Wat Pho and went for a ride on the long tail boat through the canals where we saw a few floating vendors and Wat Arun Temple of Dawn. We took the BTS Skytrain to the Chatuchak weekend market. We also went to Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World and Madame Tussauds wax museum. Needless to say, there are a lot of things to see and do in Bangkok and the places to eat are endless. Also we had a day or two of rest, where we just stayed in to get to know

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Max and brought with us a few animated movies to watch together. The sights, sounds and smells of Bangkok are truly ones that we will never forget.

We were highly impressed with how the Children's Bridge Thailand team did an outstanding job of making sure that our needs were met, and that we had everything to make this process as smooth and stress free as possible. They were very helpful in all aspects of the trip, made sure we brought the proper documents to our appointments and were willing to assist us in whatever it was that we required. They truly did an amazing job and words cannot express how grateful we were to have them through this process.



Upon coming back to Canada, we found that Max's transition into his new home a little rough on him. Everything has changed in his life, there were new sounds, smells, food, people and a language that he doesn't quite understand. Trying to find a new routine that worked for both us and him was difficult at first, and the jet lag did not help. We are both currently trying to help him through this tough time by giving him as much comfort as he needs and letting him know that we understand

what he is going through. He also does have his sleep issues, and we try to keep to his bedtime routine; so he is aware that it is time to sleep. We are working on building attachment as it is our first and utmost priority. We want him to feel safe and secure and to know that he is a permanent part of this family. Max is a sweet, affectionate, sensitive, bright, caring boy who loves to dance and make people laugh. Like any change in life, it has been quite the adjustment for all of us, but we wouldn't trade it for the world.





# Amazing Thailand Festival - 2018

By Kim Moir

On Sunday, August 5th, 2018, the Royal Thai Embassy in Ottawa organized the second annual Amazing Thailand festival at Lansdowne Park, in Ottawa, Ontario. In attendance were His Excellency Mr. Maris Sangiampongsa, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Canada who provided remarks, as well as Mrs. Kokan Sangiampongsa.

Children's Bridge families volunteered at the children's craft table for a session where kids could colour pictures of kids in Thai clothing or have their names written in Thai. It was a great opportunity for Children's Bridge families to connect and enjoy time together.



In addition, the Thai Dance Troupe of Ottawa was also in attendance and performed several beautiful dances that impressed the crowd with their grace and beauty.

Dances from a university in the North of Thailand were also performed. There was a beautiful display of Thai painted umbrellas, handicrafts as well as a intricate display of vegetable and fruit carvings and demonstrations.

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Outside there were many delicious choices of Thai delicacies to choose from half a dozen of Ottawa's finest Thai restaurants. The iced tea and shaved ice desserts were particular favourites on the very hot and humid Ottawa day! The Thai Tourism authority also had a green screen where you could take pictures with a scenes with beautiful beaches in the background.



Thank you to all who participated and volunteered at this event! It was a special day to bring the Thai community together. Special thanks to Penpimol Chuankrerkul, who is well known to Children's Bridge families for all her work volunteering and organizing!



# Brad & Erin's Adoption Journey - Connecting Two Cultures

By Erin Felak

South Korea is a land of beginnings for our family. Brad and I moved to Seoul just weeks after we got married. We moved into our first apartment and started our first grown-up jobs teaching immersion English at a language academy (*hagwon*). As a couple, we grew closer working and exploring and learning about Korea together.

Parenting, too, would begin for us in Korea. Six years after we moved back to Canada, we returned to Seoul to adopt our son YunSeul. We chose to adopt from Korea because of our strong connection to the country and culture. We felt confident that we could genuinely and enthusiastically encourage our child to embrace their identity as both Canadian and Korean.

Though the wait seemed excruciating at times, our adoption proceeded relatively swiftly and without complication. YunSeul was born in South Korea in January 2017. In July we saw his picture and heard his name for the first time, and we were instantly in love with this

energetic,  
curious little boy.

*Travel Pro at Incheon Airport*



One year later to the day, we arrived in Seoul to receive YunSeul and bring him to Canada.

At home, now the three of us, we are forging our way forward in new routines and growing together as we learn more about each other. We try to honour the individual histories that we each bring to our little family, our own experiences and connections, memories of things we love and things we miss. A picture of YunSeul's foster mother has joined our fridge-door gallery of loved ones that live far far away. We stock up on his favourite snacks (shrimp crackers and banana puffs), just like we always have Dutch ginger cookies and chocolate from my hometown.

This posture of curiosity and openness has opened up unique avenues in our attachment. We noticed that YunSeul was poking the palm of one hand with

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*Hammock at Home*



the index finger of another, but were stumped as to its significance. Then we came across the phrase *gonji-gonji* and a description of this exact hand motion in Talk To Me In Korean's Parenting Phrases in Korean e-book. Further digging on the Internet yielded details about a hand game taught to Korean babies to help them develop fine motor skills. Now it's our go-to game when we're biking or pushing him in the stroller, a way to check in and encourage eye contact. It was a point of connection that YunSeul initiated, and it could have easily gone



*Children's Bridge Success Story*

unreciprocated. Now, it allows him to bridge his memories of his foster family in Korea with his forever family in Canada, and to delight in both.

We have become a bilingual family, using English and Korean to greet each other, play together, and describe ourselves and the world around us. We feel strongly that full and unfiltered access to Korea and other Koreans is YunSeul's birthright. We learned a little Korean while we lived in Seoul, but only enough to get by. We loved our life in Korea, but we also felt the language barrier kept us from genuine engagement with Korean society. During the long adoption wait, we enrolled in language classes at the Korean Cultural Centre in downtown Ottawa and began to study Korean in earnest. We found friendship and encouragement at the KCC, and we felt closer to our son as we learned words he would also learn on the other side of the world.

Our Korean abilities are still very much beginner-level, but our efforts have made a tremendous difference in connecting with our son. We are speaking to YunSeul in both languages (imperfectly, but unreservedly) and encouraging him to speak to us in Korean for now. We connect with friends who are native Korean speakers and use other resources to provide a rich language environment. We play apps, watch videos, and at nap time and bedtime he falls asleep to a CD of Korean folk songs. We hope that some of YunSeul's Korean might be maintained rather than simply supplanted as he learns English, just as his life before joining our family will be remembered and celebrated, not erased.

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We have been utterly enchanted by YunSeul, his energy and curiosity, his strength and determination. He is like the sun rising in our lives, the brightness we can hardly bear but welcome eagerly. He came into this world neither by nor for us; he is his own fierce self. We are honoured that he sees us as trustworthy, comforting folks and has so readily welcomed us into his heart.

## Learn the Korean Baby Hand Game!

Each word is paired with motions that are repeated each time the word is said. I've written the words in standard Romanization and included the hangeul and suggestions for pronunciation. Repeat each word-motion pair four times, and end with man-se (hooray!)

Do-ri do-ri (도리 doh-ree) = shake the head gently back and forth

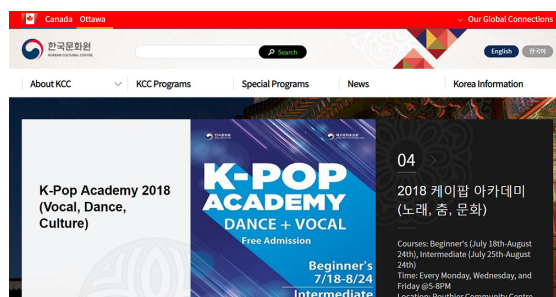
Jaem jaem (잼 gem) = open and close both hands into fists

Gon-ji gon-ji (곤지 cone-jee) = poke palm with index finger (poke with dominant hand or switch hands halfway)

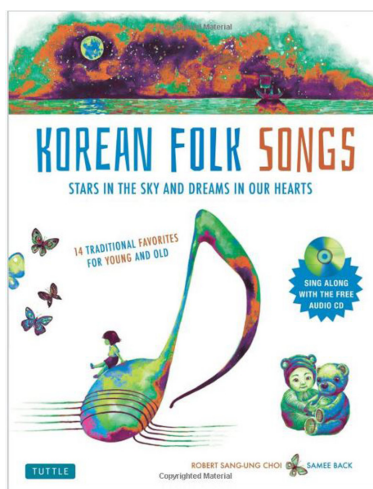
Jjak-jja-kkung jjak-jja-kkung (짝짜궁 chak-chak-koong) = clap

Man-se (만세 mahn-say) = arms up

## Links:



Korean Cultural Centre - <http://canada.korean-culture.org/en/welcome>



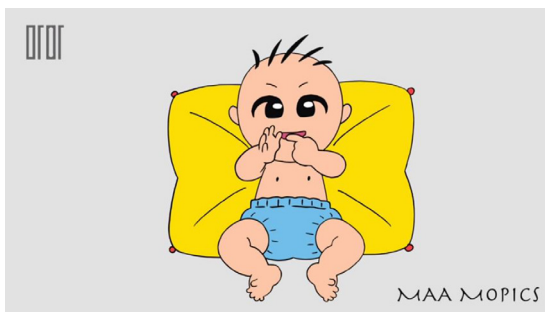
Korean Folk Songs:  
Stars in the Sky and  
Dreams in our Hearts  
(with CD) by Robert  
Sang-ung Choi -

<https://www.amazon.ca/Korean-Folk-Songs-Dreams-included/dp/0804844682>



Talk To Me in Korean Parenting  
Phrases e-book -

<https://mykoreanstore.com/collections/featured-items/products/parentingphrases>



잘하네 1 (아기 두뇌 발달놀이) [MAA영상동화]

Korean Baby Hand Game -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F8WEROhEnw>



# Korea Homeland Journey - August 2018

## William age 12

His thoughts on the trip  
/ South Korea

"It was amazing and I  
would want to go back  
again and again!"

## Sydney age 10

"It was amazing! It was  
beautiful and something  
I have never done before  
- a trip of a lifetime."

## Joanne

I cannot thank Maria  
Fulford, Mr. Park and  
Mr. Lee enough for such  
a wonderful and well  
organized experience.  
Everything was so well  
done and gave us many  
opportunities to be part  
of the Korean culture  
and see the beauty of  
the country as a family.

## Kevin

We really enjoyed our  
time in Korea. I was a  
little worried that  
William had built it up  
so much in his head  
prior to the trip that  
he might actually be  
disappointed with the  
experience. Clearly  
there was no need to  
worry.

On the first day we went  
to the amusement park.  
It was a great way to  
ease into things as both  
William and Sydney had a  
ton of fun. Our guide  
Jay was outstanding he  
had us to all the rides  
and attractions almost  
like we were on a

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special secret schedule. We walked to the front of the line enjoyed the attraction and then as we were exiting we would see that the line had grown substantially. His timing was perfect. As I mentioned it was a great way to transition into the more meaningful part of our trip. The next day and every day after that were so well organized and full of interesting experiences. We all enjoyed it very much.



I have never seen William quite as excited as he was when he met with his foster mom. He was desperate to share information with her, both through the woman from SWS and even using the translator on his phone which I think he felt was more of a direct connection with her.

The food was amazing and it was a big part of our trip as William is very interested in cooking. He was quick to try almost everything that was offered to him. He loved the fact that meal times were so interactive, some buffets, lots of food prep right at the table, sitting on the floor, etc.

Although we had some pretty long drives to get to the East Sea, the mountain retreat, the DMZ and Busan I would not have cut any of those from our itinerary. Even though I know we just scratched the surface we left feeling that we had seen so many different areas and different aspects of William's birthplace.

Please accept my sincere thank you for your role in giving my family and specifically my son such an amazing experience.





Last July, Hana (along with two other adoptees) participated on a Korean Government sponsored education program.

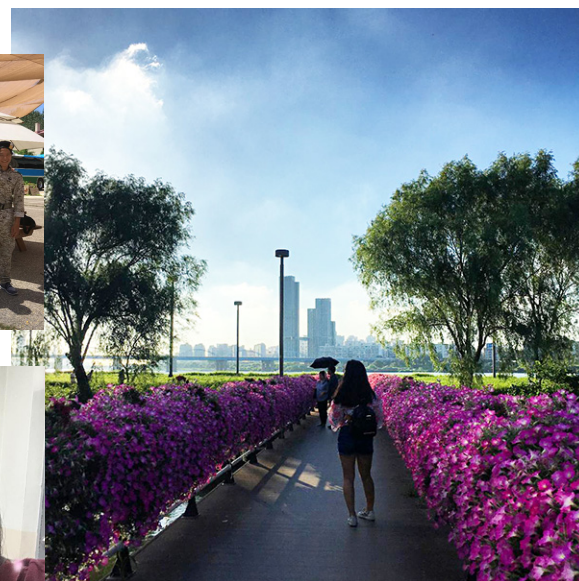
## Here is her story...

On July 7th 2018, I left Canada for my first home, Korea. This was the second time I had revisited my birthplace and I was ecstatic. As soon as we arrived at the airport we ate traditional Korean food and were hit with the realization that we had made it!

The trip was split into two parts, the first being a few days spent in Seoul sightseeing and the rest at a Korean high school with a host family. Seoul was everything we expected it to be, full of action and amazing things to see and eat. One of the best parts of this time was being able to visit a high school that specialized in traditional Korean arts. We were greeted with huge smiles and were able to watch many beautiful performances including gayageum and traditional dance and singing. The following day we spent roaming Bucheon traditional village in Seoul, clad in hanboks! Most of the girls opted for the beautiful large gowns whereas I found them to be rather restricting and decided to adorn a badass men's robe complete with a large hat and a sword.

Then it came: our homestay! Early in the morning our bus left Seoul and we reached a small town about one hour south of the city. There we met many amazing teachers and looked around the school while being tailed by many excited Korean students. Finally we met our homestay buddies and started our stay. The week and a half after

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that consisted of mainly time with our class, learning a tiny bit of Korean, our homestay families and on school excursions! Places like Lotte World, a baseball game, karaoke rooms and a water park were just some of the amazing things we got to do with our new friends. For both of the weekends we had with our host families we did something different. My experience was bussing to Seoul and spending the day seeing the sights and shopping until my wallet was empty and my backpack, full. I was also able to experience Korean church as my host family was Christian. Despite not belonging to any faith, this was one of the most insightful things I did during my stay and I'm extremely grateful to have been able to take part in that experience.

Somehow time flew by and we were at the end of our trip! Our last day of school was amazing and I had made so many friends in not just my class but with many of the other students. My class presented me with a huge card with messages from each of them all in English. I'm a little embarrassed to say I cried a little and hugged all of them tightly. This is however not goodbye for us as we are still in contact and plan on meeting again next year. The last weekend was again spent with our host families and then we said our goodbyes. The airport farewell was hard but we were all so grateful for the amount of love all of our new Koreans friends have for us.

I highly recommend anyone to go on this trip and really experience and learn to love Korea and am so so grateful to have had the chance to revisit my birthplace.





*Children's Bridge*

## Homeland Visits

Homeland visits are unique opportunities for you to visit the country from which your adoptive child is born. These visits are well planned and organized.... more info to come...



### China Homeland Visits

Contact: Darlene Catton,

Tel: 905-836-6776,

[darlene.catton@childrensbridge.com](mailto:darlene.catton@childrensbridge.com)



### South Korea Homeland Visits

Contact: Maria Fulford,

Tel: 613-226-2112 ext. 4

[maria.fulford@childrensbridge.com](mailto:maria.fulford@childrensbridge.com)



### Vietnam Homeland Visits

Contact: Maria Fulford

Tel: 613-226-2112 ext. 4

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