

*Christa's story... Passing from Northern Washington into British Columbia, Canada did not require a passport back in the 1970's. So my family would occasionally make this international road trip. I remember the border crossing where we would wait in line in our cars, but it was not much different than waiting at a poll booth. There did not appear to be many differences from one side of the border to the other, but there was a curious second language included on many signs. We ventured into restaurants in Vancouver that had new items on the menu, but it did not really register with me that Canada was a bilingual country. Nor did I understand what it meant to be bilingual. I only recall hearing English spoken throughout my childhood.*

*The first family from another culture that I remember meeting was from Mexico. This family had moved into the little mill town of Horseshoe Bend Idaho a few years after my father accepted a position at the community bank and my mother at the Prosecutor Attorney's office. My mother, intrigued by Spanish and needing an extra hand around the home, arranged for our families to meet. Peter, the eldest son with beautiful dark hair and a handsome smile, became one of my friends. Our mothers practiced English and Spanish together and we car-pooled to school from time to time. I adored his cute little brother who called me "Kista" as the "r" was tough for this toddler to pronounce. I also recall that others in town were not very open to making friends with this wonderful family. This made no sense to me, I found them so warm and open to sharing with us. To this day, the true test of a good Mexican restaurant is their Chile Relleonos. It's hard to beat the homemade version our friends shared with us.*

*Concerned about the quality of education in the little mill town, my parents moved us to Pullman as I transitioned to high school. A word about Horseshoe Bend helps to illustrate what a change this represented. The town drew its name from the bend in the river which was shaped like a horseshoe. The river wound around the mill, the little general store, a couple of gas stations and restaurants, as many taverns as churches, the K-8 grade school and the mostly trailer homes where the mill employees resided. Thinking back, I wonder if the kids with whom I went to grade school ever ventured far beyond the hills that surrounded us and if they did, what a shock it must have been to their systems. We had little preparation in school and in our daily lives for the multicultural world beyond the hills.*

*Pullman, in contrast, was a college town featuring prominently Washington State University. While still largely white and European-American in composition, my high school had more diversity of people and perspectives than my grade schools in Bothell and Horseshoe Bend. The college professors expected rigor and diverse learning experiences for their children and so the kids of the farmers that surrounded Pullman also benefited from this expectation. My friends were from various professional and academic families. In addition to studying, we also sang in choirs, acted in plays, played the piano, attended sports events and charted out a broader journey for ourselves beyond the little college town.*

*One of my closest friends, Elayne Kwon, had a particularly powerful influence upon my life. She was Korean-American, an amazing musician, intelligent and beautiful young woman. We rode to school together, discovered dating together and studied after school together. What I most remember though were the couple of times that I went to her home. Her parents were strict and*

*reserved about having people to their home. So it was really special to have dinner with them and sample a few Korean dishes. Kimchi was so different from anything I had ever tried. I was also intrigued by the stories Elayne would tell about her parents coming to America for a better life for their daughters. I gathered that her father was an important government official person back in Korea but now had a simple and somewhat frustrated life as librarian at WSU. Her parents expected much of their two daughters. They both practiced the piano hours each day and Elayne studied hard. I was in such awe of her concert piano skills and so proud to know she has gone on to be an accomplished pianist in New York City. She is still as beautiful and lively as ever. I feel blessed by the gift of her life energy growing up and the opening to the world she and her family offered up to me in high school.*