



More Time for my Family

By Mark Calzavara,
Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph

Todd Galbraith grew up on an Iowa farm, the 14th of 15 children. He met his Québécois wife Sonia Naurais in Seattle where he was working as a research associate in a hot biotech company trying to find cures for cancer, AIDS and cystic fibrosis. They married in 2001 and moved to Quebec in 2002 because they wanted to have children and they wanted them to speak French.



Todd Galbraith at work in the lab looking for answers to modern medicine's questions.

Galbraith was also looking for a new challenge. In trying to start a new life in Quebec City, he certainly found one.

As with most newcomers, learning the language was the greatest obstacle for Galbraith.

In spite of his academic background and his best efforts in French class, he was disappointed with himself. "I thought I would be able to speak French well after a year but it took about two and a half years before I could manage a decent conversation," he says. "The program was as important for helping me find friends here as teaching me the language."

While Galbraith waited for his permanent resident status he took advantage of employ-

ment programs offered by the Université Laval and the FORT program at the Valcartier Family Centre to prepare his resume and brush up on interview techniques.

In April 2004, he began his search for a biotechnology job in Quebec City. Despite his education and cutting edge experience, all his efforts produced only one interview - with a company that folded a few weeks later.

Still unemployed after eight months of searching and with his savings dwindling fast, Galbraith took a minimum wage job working

for a company that did inventory control for chain stores across the province.

Frustrated, Galbraith set a deadline. If he didn't find a suitable job in the next few months, they would quit Quebec and return to Seattle. The good news of Naurais' pregnancy brought added pressure to their situation.

Soon after, Galbraith connected with a Quebec couple he met through a friend, both doctors and retired professors, with contacts in the medical research community. They passed his resume on along with some kind words to the Serious Burns Laboratory at Hôpital St-Sacrement. Galbraith was hired and since then has worked on projects ranging from growing new sheets of skin for

burn victims to turning stem cells into bone, skin and vascular cells.

Happily employed and the proud father of a little girl, Sasha, he wonders how things would have turned out if not for the friends of a friend that took an interest in his situation. "Sasha has epilepsy and I really appreciate the health care system here. The ease of access and the fact that I never have to worry about whether my insurance is going to cover treatment is a big relief."

They bought a house on the outskirts of the city. "It's an old house which requires a fair bit of upkeep but here I work 35 hours a week so I have more time for my home and family than I would have had in Seattle," Galbraith says.

Galbraith takes advantage of Quebec City's outdoor activities as often as possible. "We go rock climbing and camping in the summertime, and I go ice climbing and telemark skiing in winter," he says.

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