

Canada:

The Land of Opportunity



Today I remember the time when I decided to leave my beloved Colombia, sadly looking away from a difficult economic situation facing the country and also because the insecurity and violence were playing out very closely to us.

Saying good-bye to my friends and family was not easy, especially leaving my mother, with whom I have always had a close relationship of friendship and trust. Her last hug and the tears in her eyes will always remain etched in my mind.

Anyway, I had the support of my wife, Valentina, and my little daughter, Sara Sofia, to move forward with this project in my life.

As I said before, it is not easy to start over, leaving behind a career that was successful, and letting go of my patients (dogs and cats), my clients, my colleagues, my friends, the food, my habits, traditions and all those places where I grew up.

Upon my arrival in Canada, I was amazed at the great size of the Toronto airport and the great racial diversity of the people who were there. But mostly, I was amazed that I could not easily

communicate with them and that the most common language I was listening to was English.

We were located to Steinbach, Manitoba, the city that welcomed us warmly. We arrived in the early spring and the cold was very difficult for us, even though people told us this did not feel as cold as in winter. I wondered, then how serious the cold of winter would be?

Five days after our arrival, I started working on a hog farm dedicated to the production of piglets. There, I had to feed the sows and piglets, process the piglets (castrate, tattoo, iron injections, cut off tails, etc.), wash rooms that were emptied, do treatments for sick animals, collect dead animals, clean the manure and on weekends, I helped in the breeding area, inseminating females entering heat, among many other things.



This work required great physical effort and had no resemblance to my veterinarian work which I performed in Colombia, where I was a medical specialist of small animals (dogs and cats). There I performed medical checkups, diagnostics, treatments, surgeries, dental treatments, etc.

I also attended courses and professional development seminars. Another thing I liked to do was write articles for pet magazines in Colombia and Spain and also for the most important newspaper in my country.

As you can see, the changes in my life were big, and often I felt very frustrated. However, the only way to change this was ➤

to look for something similar to practicing my profession and so feel the joy that once filled my heart. I began to see what the steps were to be able to achieve this goal and these were the main ones:

*** Learn the English language well, speak it, write it and listen to it. For this I would need to find a place to study. Also, I needed to start having more contact with English-speaking people, listen to the radio and watch TV, and read newspapers and magazines. This has been the most important step to develop since this depends on everyone else. Without this, great opportunities are lost.**

*** Enroll in the University of Saskatchewan to start the approval process of my profession, which requires a Canadian Benchmark Level 8 in English, three theoretical tests and practical examinations for six months in the veterinary clinic at the University.**



At the moment, I have started on my way. I'm studying at South Eastman English and Literacy Services at the Grace Mennonite Church. I am improving my language learning and although sometimes other people can learn faster, I'm aware that not everyone learns at the same speed.

As well, during this time I was able to change jobs to one where I have more contact with people and especially with animals that I like more (dogs and cats). Today I work as a professional pet groomer at Pet Valu in Steinbach.

I'm happy to be able to work with my great childhood friends and also have my little daughter Maria Paz, who was born in Canada, and her older sister, Sara Sofia, occasionally visit me at my work and they show me their love for animals. They have also become my teachers of English.

Today, I thank God, my family and my wife for the support and patience in undertaking this journey. I also thank my teachers (SEELS), my church, and coworkers who teach me and correct my mistakes.

Dear readers, do not give up the fight, although it is difficult, we have a responsibility to pave the way for our children and be an example for them in fulfilling their goals and dreams.



- Oscar Alexander Roa Acosta