



You could almost say French is in Emma Pearce's DNA. From the time she was young, Emma was exposed to French in her home.

"My mother was a high school French teacher," says Emma. "Mom really inspired me ... she really encouraged me to learn the language, because she understood it would open a world of opportunities for me."

Growing up in Hope, there was no French Immersion program, but in Grade 5, Emma could choose to take French as an elective.

"As a teen, I did resist French a bit, but I did have a knack for it," Emma explains. After competing high school, she spent a year as a nanny for a family in France. "That's where I honed my French skills," Emma says.

Upon her return, Emma enrolled in French department at the University of Victoria (UVic). Although, unsure as to whether she wanted to teach, she stayed in the program. "I was getting good grades and I knew that if I had a teaching specialty, I would have a better chance at getting hired," Emma says.

Emma declared her major in French during her second year at UVic, and by her third year she minored in linguistics. She admits she had to learn how to overcome her fear of making mistakes when speaking with Francophones.

At university, she became an adjudicator for the Concours d'art oratoire. "That helped me get over my fear of sounding silly," she says.

Armed with her undergraduate degree in French and linguistics, she was immediately hired by the Vancouver School Board - quite a feat given that seldom happens to recent university grads. "Most new teachers have to be a Teacher on Call (TOC), but French was a huge factor in me getting a full-time contract and my own classroom," Emma says.

Following in her mother's footsteps, Emma is teaching in the language she embraced so many years ago. She is a kindergarten French Immersion teacher at Vancouver's Lord Tennyson Elementary.