



Peijuan Wang and Morris Mao say grace before a meal with their sons Justin, 8, and Bobby, 18. Their Christian faith is an important value that Wang and Mao want to pass on to their children.



Justin's desk. His parents call him their Canadian child.



Bobby's desk. His parents call him their Chinese child.

## Immigrant Identities

Photos and story by Elaine Bombay

Peijuan Wang and her husband Morris Mao had a good life in China. Mao was a college instructor and Wang was running an English language school.

All that was missing was a second child.

Living under China's one-child policy, their options were to abandon that desire or emigrate.

Friends had told them about their experience moving to Canada and settling in Belleville. Wang and Mao decided to follow in their friends' footsteps and move here in 2004.

Mao immediately found work at Stream, a call centre. Wang took a few months to settle their son Bobby, then eight, and to set up a home for the family, and then also started working at Stream.

The family also connected quickly with a church in Belleville. They were invited to attend a service at Quinte Alliance Church on their first weekend in Cana-

da, and have been attending ever since.

Their Canadian baby, Justin, was born in 2006.

After Justin was born, Wang studied for her teacher's certificate. She teaches French, drama, dance and music at Prince of Wales Public School and also supply teaches. According to Statistics Canada, China has been the most common source country for immigrants to Canada since 1983. A StatsCan report released in May 2013 shows that 20.6 percent of Canadian residents were foreign-born, according to the 2011 census. That gives Canada the highest foreign-born population in the G8.

Wang and Mao consider Justin their "Canadian child," while Bobby is their "Chinese child." Bobby prefers to eat Chinese food, while Justin likes to try all sorts of food and quickly tires of anything served too often.

Bobby doesn't think of himself as belonging to any nation, but sees himself more as a citizen of the whole

world. Justin has never lived anywhere but Canada and doesn't identify as anything but Canadian.

Wang likes that her children can grow up with such diversity in Canada. Her sons go to school with children from different backgrounds and with different mindsets, something that she didn't experience in her more homogenous childhood hometown.

Wang and Mao emphasize Christian values over cultural values with Bobby and Justin. They want their sons to see that life is about sharing with others and being useful and helpful. They try to model their faith through their involvement in the community, especially in the Chinese Christian community in Belleville. **For more on the story, visit:** <http://www.elainebombay.ca/#/still-1/>



Justin Mao, an avid reader, doesn't know yet what he wants to be when he grows up.



Bobby Mao composes his own music and hopes to study music in university next year.