



THE SAINT

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LEARNING
OUTSIDE
THE CLASSROOM

OLD BOYS

JOSEPH FUNG '99

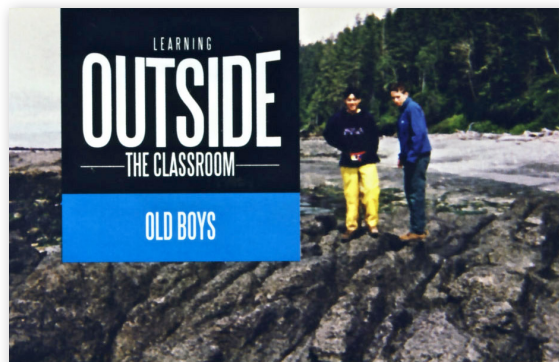
WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR

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FEATURED STORY

LIKE MANY OTHERS, JOSEPH FUNG WAS SIGNIFICANTLY TRANSFORMED BY HIS EXPERIENCES AT ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL.

What's unique to Joseph is how he's built on his time as a Georgian to bring a similar Canadian educational experience, focused on inquiry-based learning, to Hong Kong. He has attracted the attention of local parents, and also that of educators back in Canada, after partnering this past year with St. George's School and other universities and independent schools in Canada.



A JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY

When you first meet Joseph Fung, you're struck by his genuine ardour and relaxed chattiness. He speaks in depth, seamlessly mixing into the conversation topics of food sciences, financial technologies, and global politics. With his amicable personality and long list of business accomplishments, it's hard to imagine how different he was when he first joined Saints.

Joseph remembers largely keeping to himself during his first few years at St. George's and most of his teachers describing him as "shy and studious." Of his earliest memories of St. George's, Joseph describes: "I loved reading, and I remember one of the greatest gifts I ever received was a World Book Encyclopaedia set. I was fascinated with sciences and history from an early age. In my elementary years I would spend hours each day reading about different types of insects, animals, rocks, or trees I had discovered in the forest."

Being the new kid, and especially coming from a different country, didn't make fitting in easy either. "My parents moved to Vancouver with me when I was three years old in anticipation of Hong Kong's handover from Britain to China in 1997," said Joseph. "I had been in Canada for some time, but didn't join Saints until Grade 4. At that point, I didn't identify myself as an Asian and I wasn't quite one of the Canadian boys either."

He attributes eventually coming out of his shell to the learning environment at St. George's—the multitude of outdoor activities and intramural sports such as rugby. "And just growing up with my peers,

the experiences and time together brings you closer," Joseph added. "Saints was always great at doing that. As students, we were tested and confronted in many positive ways that brought us together."

GROWTH BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

St. George's Outdoor Education Program enabled him to thrive, and Joseph fondly recalls the various camps and afternoons spent exploring the grounds. Around Grade 7 he also discovered a love for sports, such as skiing and taekwondo, which gave him the courage to try rugby at St. George's, where he played as flanker and then as fullback. "By Grade 8, I started to open up and felt a growing sense of camaraderie with my peers because of my involvement in sports. I had stopped being the reclusive bookworm in the library that most of them had known. Saints taught me how to get out of my comfort zone, and playing rugby was a real turning point for me. The prospect of getting smashed in a ruck or a tackle was daunting, but was something I was ready to challenge myself with." Before too long, Joseph was striving for his Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award and also became a ski and taekwondo instructor by Grade 10.

"Sine Timore Aut Favore – Without Fear or Favour" still resonates with me today and in many different ways. I grew in confidence during my time at Saints and continue to live by the School's culture of tackling challenges head-on. The way that the School and my parents brought me up made we want to be independent and not rely on any privileges that I hadn't earned for myself," he says.

CAREER AND BACK TO SCHOOLING

After moving the family to Canada, Joseph's father, Thomas Fung, founded one of Canada's leading real estate and media empires. It would have been an easy option for Joseph to settle into the family business right after graduation. Instead, he initially shunned that opportunity and embarked on his own career—initially in investment banking, and later in research on the buy side for Morgan Stanley and then at Hong Kong's telecommunications giant, PCCW.

"An important life lesson instilled in me from my time at Saints was to always add value to the conversation," Joseph said. "Despite my father's high profile in the business world, I was never really aware of his position in society. Perhaps I knew, but I failed to take notice. As a father, he was also keen to ensure that I wasn't brought up with a silver spoon in my mouth, and so I wasn't afforded many of the luxuries that many people might expect. In my 20s I came to realize the extent of his success, but I never felt entitled to anything. I knew if I was ever going to work within the family business, I need to be contributing and not extracting anything undeserved for myself."

Thomas Fung is himself a polite and unassuming man, and it is clear that these traits have rubbed off on his son. But eventually, no one was more pleased than the family patriarch to have his son return to propose a new venture for the family business to consider.

FAIRCHILD CANADIAN ACADEMY

"When I moved to Hong Kong in 2008, I began reflecting on my childhood and my education in Canada. Saints has really defined my character and I owe a lot of who I am to the experiences and friendships I forged there," Joseph said. "I was aware that my father had philanthropic interests in education, so we began discussing how we could combine our passions. From there, we started to develop a vision for a ground-breaking school in Hong Kong."

Once again, Joseph did what he does best and went back to the books, learning as much as he could about inquiry-based learning. Reconnecting with St. George's through Headmaster Tom Matthews in 2011, Joseph shared his vision to create a school in Hong Kong aligned with Canadian independent school pedagogy for the pre-school to Grade 12 market. Within a couple of years the idea began to gain momentum and Fairchild Canadian Academy was born.



"Hong Kong is one of the world's most international cities, attracting students with backgrounds from around the world. Unfortunately, the education system hasn't changed much from colonial British era. Focus is still on standardized exams encompassing over 70% of the student's assessments. Even at a very early age, children are undergoing a lot of stress. To perform well and efficiently, students are focused on grades and achievements instead of the learning process. My aim is for Fairchild Canadian Academy to fill a niche by providing a learning environment that fosters an intrinsic motivation for learning. 'Creating curiosity, creativity and confidence' is our mission and this is realized in our teaching methods, our learning

environments, and most importantly, in the positive attitude of our teachers."

In January 2016, the school's first venue for early childhood opened and, with classes filling up rapidly, by December of that year their kindergarten venue opened.

"What we aimed to achieve from the outset was to create enriching, hands-on, outdoor experiences and education (something that Canada is famous for) in Hong Kong, where these types of learning opportunities are often more limited."

With plans to grow their number of schools through both primary and secondary education, Joseph and his team are forging strong connections with universities and independent schools in Canada to encourage the exchange of research studies and best-practice pedagogy and to promote the strong ties that exist between Canada and Hong Kong. In this past year, Fairchild Canadian Academy has signed memoranda of understanding with the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and York House School. St. George's is proud to be a partner in this collaborative exchange.

FULL CIRCLE

Much of Joseph's success can be credited to his time at St. George's. "The most influential teacher for me was Dougal Fraser. Like most of my classmates, I was very fearful of him, as he was a strict disciplinarian. But, taking his class in Grade 12 was really a defining moment for me. He always demanded the best of his students and emphasized provoking thought with questions rather than answers. I think this still inspires me up to today, as I have always found myself needing to know why? I believe that asking the right questions is better than demanding an answer to everything."

So why has Joseph's journey gone full circle now to focus on education?

"Throughout our lives we are always learning, and I am fascinated about this lifetime quest for knowledge. More importantly, I believe this is a skill developed and nurtured at an early age. I think anyone who goes to a school like Saints is incredibly privileged, but the value in that privilege is lost if you don't do anything productive with it." Joseph adds, "I feel I now have the opportunity in many ways to do something that is meaningful and that will give back to the community. I'm not in this for the short haul; this is a long-term plan we have to make something very special. At the same time I want to give back to my family business and to Hong Kong. And I feel I can, in so many ways."

Spending more time in Canada has allowed



Joseph to increase his contributions to his family business and strengthen his relations with St. George's. Last year, Joseph joined the Board of Directors of St. George's School, where he contributes his business development and financial expertise to create connections in Asia, an area of increasing significance to the St. George's global outreach and reputation. In addition to this, Joseph was appointed as a special advisor on the Asia Business Leader Advisory Council (ABLAC), which works within the Asia Pacific Foundation, advising the federal government and the Prime Minister of Canada on cross-Pacific business and political opportunities.

On a recent visit to Hong Kong, Dr. Tom Matthews signed a memorandum of understanding with Fairchild Canadian Academy, connecting both schools for learning exchanges between teachers and students. The collaboration will also support the promotion of St. George's in Hong Kong, a city from which we have welcomed many great students over the years. "There is real alignment between what our schools are trying to do. We recognise that every child is different and every child is unique. A lot of it has to do with exploration, discovery, and creativity, and in essence really trying to get a child to love learning. I am excited to see what happens at Fairchild Canadian Academy, and I am proud of our connection with Joseph and the school," said Dr. Matthews.

Joseph is quick to point out that for any meaningful connections to occur he must be adding value to the relationship with the School. Being bold, ambitious, and generous – yet not assuming anything in return. "Without Fear or Favour," he says with a smile.