June 10, 2015

Walking across the Convocation stage was 20 years in the making

Edmonton—Ngan Nguyen, or ‘Emy’ as her classmates know her is a dreamer in the best sense of the word. Emy has had the same dream for nearly half her life and to make it come true, she decided to do something really brave.

Brave because she walked away from a good job after saving for years to set aside money for an education. Brave because she travelled from Vietnam to get the education and because she had to leave her two-year-old daughter behind to do it. Since the age of 18, Emy wanted to learn about early childhood development in a western country and bring that education back to Vietnam. She got that opportunity at 34 when she came to MacEwan University to study in the Early Learning and Child Care diploma program.

“When I was young, I could see the differences between children from western countries and the children of my country,” says Emy. “I know those differences are because education is different and that’s why I wanted to be an early learning educator.”

Her education was everything she had hoped for until she started comparing her current family situation to what she was learning in class. “It was hard for me and I thought I would quit the program so I could support my daughter,” says Emy. When phone calls, Skype and emails home weren’t enough, she made extra trips back to Vietnam, but the frequent flights were eating up her carefully saved budget, so faculty members offered child care strategies she could pass along to her husband.

Eventually Emy’s husband and daughter decided to move to Canada, but it was another year and a half before the family was reunited in December 2014. With her husband and her daughter at her side, Emy is more determined than ever. Emy plans on returning to Vietnam and apply everything she has learned to her own child care centre. On June 18, Emy will celebrate her accomplishments, and her birthday, as she crosses the stage at the Spring Convocation ceremony.