

**Chatterbox #44 – Tom from Montreal to Korea to England and back again****Transcript**

Maura: Hello everyone, it's Maura! And Tom!

Tom: Hi!

Maura: And we're here with the Culips podcast, and this is a Chatterbox episode. Now, don't forget to go our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com, and if you're listening on iTunes and have never been to the site, come check it out. On the website, you can become a member. And when you're a member, you have access to our transcripts, more detailed explanations, and even a quiz to go with each episode. Now, in our Chatterbox episode, we chat about all different kinds of things that are of interest or happening in Canada and North America, and sometimes we also interview people of interest. Now today, that's what we're going to do. We're going to interview my friend Tom Eason. Now, Tom and I met just a little while ago and we teach together. And I'm from another province, called Ontario, and I moved to Montreal as an adult. And for me, it's always interesting to meet people who are from Montreal and grew up in the area and I know, Tom, that you did. So I was wondering what you think makes Quebec or Montreal a special place.

Tom: I think Montreal is a really special place. I think we're lucky to be here. I think one of the things that makes it so special is the fact that there are so many different kinds of people, so many different cultures, all kind of mixed together and stuck beside each other. Depending on where you go, you can find people from different countries who speak different languages, who eat different kinds of food, who listen to different kinds of music, all together on this one island.

Maura: Yeah, I agree that that is something really cool about Montreal. And it's also interesting that it's an island. For the longest time, when I was living in Ontario, I didn't even know that Montreal was an island.

Tom: It's true, a lot of people don't realize it. But I think it kind of gives people who live here a sense of being part of one complete whole, rather than just a bunch of different little towns stuck together.

Maura: Yeah. I think one reason, as well, why people might not realize it's an island is because the water that separates the island of Montreal from the mainland is not very large. You don't have to cross an ocean to get here.

Tom: No, that's true. We're just an island **in the middle of** a river. We're not out **in the middle of** the ocean or anything like that. That being said, some of the bridges that lead to Montreal make for some of the best views in town.

- Maura: That is true. I do actually really enjoy the view from the **Jacques Cartier Bridge**. So, you grew up here, you know a lot about the city, obviously. What are some of your favourite things to do around Montreal?
- Tom: Well, it depends what time of year it is, of course. Talking about the **Jacques Cartier Bridge**, in the summertime, you can go and watch the **fireworks competitions** that happen usually twice a week. And we have contestants from all different countries who come and put on these beautiful fireworks displays, and you can go and either stand up on the bridge, high above the water, or down on the shore below the bridge, and watch the fireworks and listen to the music. It's a beautiful thing to do on a summer evening.
- Maura: Yeah, I've only done that a couple times, but I really liked it. Have you done it many times?
- Tom: I usually get out three or four times every summer.
- Maura: Nice. And it is interesting, as well, like you said, that so many countries participate and that there are fireworks displays from all over the world.
- Tom: It is. It's really a part of Montreal being such a multicultural place.
- Maura: Yes. And your answer really got me thinking about the summer and what a great time it's going to be in the summer. And we're still going through the winter. And Harp and I, we always talk about how much the winter bothers us and how long it is. How do you feel about the Canadian, Montreal winter?
- Tom: Well, I grew up here so you could say I'm used to it. I really don't mind it so much. Yeah, sometimes the snow is a **pain in the neck** and it can get slippery but, you know, the sun never shines quite as brightly as it does in the wintertime. And there's a whole other set of things to do in Montreal in the winter. You know, some people go cross-country skiing up on **the mountain**. You can go skating in the old park or on **Beaver Lake**. There's all kinds of stuff to do in the winter in Montreal.
- Maura: Yes, you're right. It's not always that bad. So, you grew up here, there's lots of great things to do, except at one point you left and went other places.
- Tom: That's true, I did.
- Maura: So where is the first other country that you travelled to?
- Tom: My first big trip was to South Korea back in 2003.
- Maura: Oh, wow. And how did you end up there?

- Tom: Well, truth to tell, I followed a girl.
- Maura: I see. So, it was her idea to go somewhere?
- Tom: **That's right. That's right.** We had just started dating not too long before. She had wanted to travel for a really long time, and so when she got an opportunity to go to South Korea, she took it, and after a few months of doing **the long-distance thing**, I decided to go over and **pay her a visit**. So I got to spend the summer in South Korea.
- Maura: Ah, cool. And is there anything in particular that you really enjoyed about South Korea and being over there?
- Tom: Well, there's lots that I enjoyed about South Korea. Well, when I first arrived, in Seoul, my arrival in Korea was a little bit of a shock, really. The first thing I had to do was take a taxi to a bus station, but when I went to take out money for the taxi, **the bank machine ate my bankcard**. So I had to go to a bank and get a new one, but I didn't know where to go. All I had was an address, but I had no idea how to get there. So I ended up in downtown Gwangju, with an address. And random people would stop me on the street, because I guess I looked lost, and they would offer to help me out. And so they would walk with me for a few blocks and try to help me find the place where I was going, and when they couldn't figure it out, they would stop someone else. And people were just so willing to help me out. I had at least three or four different people who walked with me around the city to help me find where I needed to go, and eventually I got there and I got what I needed. People took such great care of me. It was great!
- Maura: That is really sweet, and that's a really nice first impression to have of a new place, I think.
- Tom: It really is. After a couple of scary moments watching my bankcard disappear, I was very well taken care of.
- Maura: Oh, that's good. So, after that, you kind of had **the travel bug**, and still decided to travel later on.
- Tom: Yeah, that's right. While I was in Korea, I travelled around in the country quite a bit. We went to Seoul, to Busan, to Andong, down to Jeju. Because Korea's not a very big country, it's very easy to travel all over the place. And so then when we came back to Canada, I still wanted to travel. So a couple of years later, I took a trip down to Peru.
- Maura: Cool. And what did you do there?

- Tom: I went to Lake Titicaca, which is the highest fresh water lake in the world. I went to Cusco, which is the ancient capital of the Inca Empire. I hiked the Inca Trail, and I got to see Machu Picchu.
- Maura: Wow, so that sounds pretty amazing.
- Tom: It was.
- Maura: And then you also went to London, England.
- Tom: Right. So, the girl I followed to Korea, who's now my wife, her desire to go to Europe **rubbed off on me**. While I was in Korea, I also discovered that I love to teach. And so, in the meantime, I went to school, I trained to become a teacher, and then I found that in London, there was a big shortage of high school teachers. And so I found a job out there, and my wife and I moved out to Croydon in South London for all of last year.
- Maura: Oh, wow. So how did you like teaching over there?
- Tom: Oh, it was fantastic. I got to learn a whole lot of new stuff, especially about the way they use the English language over there, which is not quite the same as the way we use it here.
- Maura: That's interesting. Did you find there was a big difference between our English and their English?
- Tom: There really was. And not just the accent. They use expressions that don't really make any sense to people from Canada.
- Maura: So, did you have to learn a lot of new slang and vocabulary and stuff like that?
- Tom: **I did. I did.** And I had to be careful about the things I said to my students as well. For instance, I would tell my class a story about going to buy a new pair of **pants** and they would all start laughing because for them **pants** means *underwear*.
- Maura: I see. That is funny and definitely **pants** over here in Canada means slacks or trousers or jeans.
- Tom: Exactly.
- Maura: Harp and I actually just did an episode about books, because we like books. And because you're an English teacher, you must like books. So I wanted to ask you as well, what one of your favourite books is or if you've read any good books lately that you could recommend.

- Tom: Well, I always try to alternate between reading a more serious, **heavy** book and something a little bit **lighter** and easier to read. So, the last book I read was a **light** one. It was by Tom Clancy. It was called *Red Storm Rising* and if you like books about war and political thrillers and that sort of stuff, it's a really, really good read. The last book that really, really **blew my mind** though was a nonfiction book by a guy named Daniel Levitin. He's a researcher into musicology, and this book was called *This is your Brain on Music* and it's all about how listening to different sounds and different rhythms and music in general has an impact on your brain and the way you think and the way you feel.
- Maura: Oh, that's really interesting for musicians and non-musicians alike, I think, because I don't really know much about music, but it sounds like a really interesting topic. Now yourself, do you play any musical instruments?
- Tom: Yeah, I do. I play a couple of different instruments. I play the guitar, I play a little bit of drums, I play the piano, and I like to make music on the computer as well.
- Maura: So, how old were you when you started playing music?
- Tom: My mom first put me in piano lessons when I was about six years old and at that time, I didn't want to hear anything about it. My biggest concern was that she not put my lessons on Saturday mornings so I wouldn't miss my cartoons. That was all I cared about.
- Maura: And eventually, did you grow to like your piano lessons?
- Tom: **I did. I did.** My mom actually showed me **the error of my ways**. She put my piano lessons on Saturday mornings because I was watching too many cartoons. But I grew to love to play the piano, and just to make music in general. I think it's a really great gift that she gave me.
- Maura: So, do you play in any bands? Do you practice on your own now? How often are you making music?
- Tom: Oh, I try to play something at least a little bit every day. But at least once a week, I get together with a friend or two and we **jam** for a little while.
- Maura: Yeah, cool. And you were just telling me that you found a **jam** hall.
- Tom: Yeah, a little **jam** space, just a room that you can rent that has some equipment in it, has some amplifiers and a drum kit and a couple of microphones. It's just a soundproof box that you can go in and make as much noise as you want.

- Maura: So, are you seeing music only as a hobby in your future?
- Tom: **For the time being**, yeah, yeah. I do it for me.
- Maura: So, one last question. Do you have any advice for our listeners on learning English and learning a language, whether it's a technique they can use or a strategy that you thought was useful?
- Tom: Well, I can recommend that anyone trying to learn a language use music as much as possible. Setting things to a rhythm makes them much easier to remember. Listening to popular music, you can pick up different idioms and expressions, and if you have a printed set of lyrics that you can read as you follow along to a song that you're listening to, then it can help you learn different words and different structures very easily. Plus, you get the benefit that it's much easier to listen to a song over and over and over again than it is to read, let's say, a text, or listen to a dialogue many, many times.
- Maura: I think that's a good point. In addition to listening to music and having fun, you can also create your own song to help memorize certain grammatical points. And actually, on YouTube, I've seen some of these things, little songs about prepositions or verbs and verb tenses. It is a good way to learn. I think you're right. So, thanks so much for letting us interview you.
- Tom: It was my pleasure.
- Maura: And we hope that everyone out there enjoyed learning a little bit about Tom, too. Don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com, and if you have any suggestions or episode ideas, always feel free to contact us or leave a comment. So, we'll be talking to you soon. This has been Maura and...
- Tom: Tom.
- Maura: And we'll see you later. Bye!
- Tom: Buh-bye!

## **Detailed Explanation**

### In the middle of

In this episode, Tom says “**in the middle of** the river” and “**in the middle of** the ocean.” To say that something is **in the middle of a place** is an expression that doesn’t mean that something is exactly in the middle. To say that something is **in the middle of a place** means that it is really in it! In the way Tom used it, it describes an island that is surrounded by water, far from the edge of the river or ocean.

So, to say *one place is in the middle of another place* does not have to be specific, but you might also hear it used literally if there is a reason to be precise.

Here are a couple of examples to compare:

Joan: I was **in the middle of** the forest when I heard the shotgun.

Pete: Were you scared?

Victor: I think we should hang the painting **in the middle of** the wall. What do you think?

Fred: I think we should hang it a bit higher.

### Jacques Cartier Bridge

Montreal has six bridges that connect it to the mainland. One of these is **Jacques Cartier Bridge**. It’s on the south side of Montreal and it was built in 1930.

Here are the names of the other bridges:

Honore Mercier Bridge

Champlain Bridge

Concordia Bridge

Saint Laurent Railway Bridge

Victoria Bridge

In addition to bridges, Montreal also has a couple of underwater tunnels to get to and from the island.

### Fireworks competition

The international **fireworks competition** in Montreal started in 1985 at La Ronde Amusement Park. Throughout the summer, once or twice a week, there is a fireworks display that can be viewed from outside the park, like Tom said, on the Jacques Cartier Bridge or from anywhere around the area. What also makes this special is that the fireworks are set to music and you can turn your radio to the station to hear it! Montrealers and tourists alike attend these events.



A pain in the neck

**A pain in the neck** is an idiom that Tom uses to describe the snow. To say that someone or something is **a pain in the neck** means that it is not fun. When using this expression, *not fun* could mean annoying, difficult, or a lot of work. It is always negative though, just like an actual pain in the neck.

Snow can be **a pain in the neck** because it makes driving more difficult, and you have to shovel the snow, and it can also be difficult to walk in.

Here are a couple more examples with **a pain in the neck**:

Pamela: I hate working on projects with Bob.

Sam: Yeah, he doesn't work very hard and can be **a pain in the neck**.

Wally: I hate my TV.

Carlos: Why? What's wrong with it?

Wally: It always stops working and I have to get up and fix it. It's such **a pain in the neck**.

You could also say *a pain in the butt* or *a pain in the ass*. (Be careful with this last one though, because the word *ass* is considered to be quite rude by many people.)

The mountain and Beaver Lake

**The mountain** is the small mountain that Montreal has in the middle of the city. People who live in the area often call it **the mountain** without saying its real name. Its real name is Mount Royal, often written as Mont Royal in French.

**The mountain's** highest peak is over 700 feet high. There are many trails for walking up and around Mount Royal. People can also drive up and park their cars. There are many views of the city from **the mountain** at any time of the year. During the summer, people lounge about, and during the winter people can snowshoe or cross-country ski. As Tom mentions, people can also go skating on **Beaver Lake**, which is located at the top of **the mountain**.

The long-distance thing

Tom reveals at one point in the interview that he did **the long-distance thing**. **Long-distance** can describe many things that are done with a considerable distance between two important parts. There are **long-distance** telephone calls and **long-distance** running. In this case, Tom was talking about a **long-distance relationship**, when the two people in the couple live far from each other. He talks about his girlfriend living in South Korea while he was still back in Canada.



A lot of people believe that **long-distance relationships** don't work and that trouble always starts for the couple. But some people (like Tom!) are able to have successful **long-distance relationships**, at least temporarily.

### That's right. That's right.

On a couple of occasions in this episode, Tom repeats a word or a short sentence. To the question about it being his girlfriend's idea to go somewhere, he says, "**That's right. That's right.**" The repetition of a phrase like this is done for emphasis and the speaker usually does it without thinking.

Tom also repeats "**I did**" later on. The repetition of these short responses does not change any meaning, but only emphasizes the point. This is quite a natural thing to do in speech, but never in writing. Repetition like this can only be done with very short phrases, like Tom's. We've heard this in previous episodes when *good* was repeated.

### To pay someone a visit

**To pay someone a visit** is simply another way to say *to visit*, or to indicate that you are planning to visit a person or place. When most people think of the word *pay*, they think of money, but in this case, money is not involved.

When talking about his girlfriend in Korea, Tom says that he "decided to go over and **pay her a visit**." He could have instead said that he "decided to go over and visit her," without any change to the meaning.

Here is another example with **to pay someone a visit**:

Annabelle: Guess who's **paying me a visit** this weekend?  
Lance: Henry? Cool!

### The bank machine ate my bankcard

When Tom arrived in Korea, he tried to use a bank machine, but the machine took his bankcard and didn't give it back. When telling this story, Tom says, "**the bank machine ate my bankcard**," which is the way this is most often described.

### The travel bug

When a person decides that they like to travel and want to continue travelling, we can say they have **the travel bug**. The word *bug* has many meanings, and one meaning is a virus. In this case, the word *bug* is used to mean a virus in a funny way, as though **the travel bug** is something that you catch like a cold. The desire to travel is stronger than the individual can resist, and forces them to travel.

Here is another example with **the travel bug**:

Dwayne: Where's Shauna? I haven't seen her around lately.

Kyle: She's still got **the travel bug**. She's somewhere in Asia right now.

### To rub off on someone

Tom uses an idiom to describe how his girlfriend's love of travel affected him and got him to also love travel. When someone spends time with another person with a certain quality or behaviour, and then begins to have the same quality or behaviour, we can say that the person or the certain quality or behaviour **rubbed off on** the first person.

An example is Sue, who hangs out with Josh, who loves heavy metal music. After some time, Sue starts to like heavy metal music too, because Josh's love of the music influenced her. Another example could be Yvonne, who loves to go out dancing and to stay out all night. Melinda never did this before, but now she also loves it and goes out dancing every weekend. In this case, Yvonne **rubbed off on** Melinda.

You can say that the behaviour **rubbed off on** you or that the person **rubbed off on** you.

Here is another dialogue example:

Harold: You never used to like comic books. How'd you get into them?

Genevieve: My friend Graham introduced me to them. I guess you could say it **rubbed off on me**.

### Pants or underwear

In North America, **pants** are the clothes that people wear on the lower half of the body, which cover the legs completely. They are a common piece of clothing most everywhere around the world. Like Tom says though, in different English-speaking countries, the name for them may be different. In North America, we call them **pants**, but in the UK, the word **pants** means **underwear**!

To be clear, in the UK, you could say *jeans*, *trousers*, or *slacks* instead of **pants**.

### Light and heavy books

When Tom speaks about **light** and **heavy** books in this episode, he is not talking about their weight. A **light** read or a **light** book is a book that's relatively easy to read. In a **light** book, the style of writing is not difficult, the topic is not complicated, and it is not too long. The adjective **light** can also be used in other situations to describe something or someone that is not complicated or difficult.

To describe a **heavy** book is exactly the opposite of **light**. A **heavy** read or book means that it is a complicated topic, the writing might be difficult to read, and it could be very long.

To blow someone's mind

**To blow someone's mind** means to really impress or surprise someone. If something was really amazing, original, or thought provoking, you can say that it **blew your mind**. In this episode, Tom says that the last book he read, called *This is your Brain on Music*, **blew his mind**, which means that he found the book amazing, original, or thought provoking, or all three at the same time!

Here are a couple more examples with **to blow someone's mind**:

Lee: Have you had a chance to listen to Radiohead's new album?

Jared: Yeah, it's great! It **blew my mind**!

Dominic: I went to see a play last night, and the main actors **blew my mind** with their performance.

Elena: Oh, wow. It sounds like I should check it out.

The error of one's ways

This is an expression that actually means what it says. To talk about **the error of your ways** is to say that you made a mistake or error in some way. This is used after you have made the error and have realized that some mistakes or bad choices were made.

Someone might say, "I now see **the error of my ways**." In this episode, Tom says, "My mom actually showed me **the error of my ways**."

Here are a couple of examples with **the error of one's ways**:

Dan: I understand **the error of my ways** now.

Lucy: Good. Now we can move on.

June: How are things with Elizabeth?

Dorothy: It took her a long time to see **the error of her ways**. Things are all right now, though.

To jam

**To jam** is to gather as musicians, often informally, and play improvised music without any planning or much practice. There are **jam** halls or **jam** spaces where bands go to play for fun or to practice and write new songs. Musicians can be part of **jam** sessions. There are also **jam** bands, which are known for spontaneously playing unrehearsed music when giving a concert.

The verb **to jam** also has a few other meanings completely unrelated to music.

For the time being

**For the time being** is an expression that means *for now*. Maura asks Tom if he plays music only as a hobby, and his response is, “**For the time being**, yes.” So for Tom, at this moment in time, or for now, the answer is yes, but in the future things could change.

Here are a couple of examples with this expression:

Pete: Let’s just wait here for Chad.

Ryan: OK. And **for the time being**, we can just sit down.

Ted: So, what do you do for a living?

Duanna: I’m working as an accountant **for the time being**, but I’m thinking of going back to school next year.

**Quiz**

1. **Monika: Jon really bothers me. He's such a \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Please fill in the blank.**

- a) pain in the foot
- b) pain in the back
- c) pain in the neck
- d) neck pain

2. **What is a long-distance relationship?**

- a) a relationship where the people have been dating for a long time
- b) a relationship where the people have not been dating for a long time
- c) a relationship that is not official
- d) a relationship where the people don't live in the same city

3. **If you talk about paying someone a visit in the future, what does this mean?**

- a) You need to pay someone money.
- b) You are planning to visit someone.
- c) You have to pay to visit someone.
- d) You don't want to visit someone.

4. **When a bank machine does not give you your bankcard back, what do people often say to describe this?**

- a) The bank machine ate my bankcard.
- b) The bank machine turned my bankcard to garbage.
- c) The bank machine disappeared my bankcard.
- d) The bank machine spit my bankcard.

5. **If a person has a strong desire to travel, we can say they have what?**

- a) the travel virus
- b) the travel bug
- c) the airplane bug
- d) the travel disease

6. Which expression means that one person's behaviour influenced another person's behaviour?

- a) to rub into someone
- b) to rub someone
- c) to rub on someone
- d) to rub off on someone

7. In the UK, which of the following means underwear?

- a) trousers
- b) socks
- c) pants
- d) books

8. When speaking about music, what does the verb *to jam* mean?

- a) to play improvised music with others
- b) to play music that has been rehearsed many times
- c) to play music with one other person
- d) to play music alone

9. Shenia: My trip was great! You should visit New York too. It'll \_\_\_\_\_!

Please fill in the blank.

- a) blow your mind
- b) blow your horn
- c) rub off on you
- d) be a pain in the butt

**Answers:**    1.c    2.d    3.b    4.a    5.b    6.d    7.c    8.a    9.a