MY JOURNEY THROUGH THE CERTIFICATE IN INTERNATIONAL LEARNING

A 4-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE BY AUGUSTINE



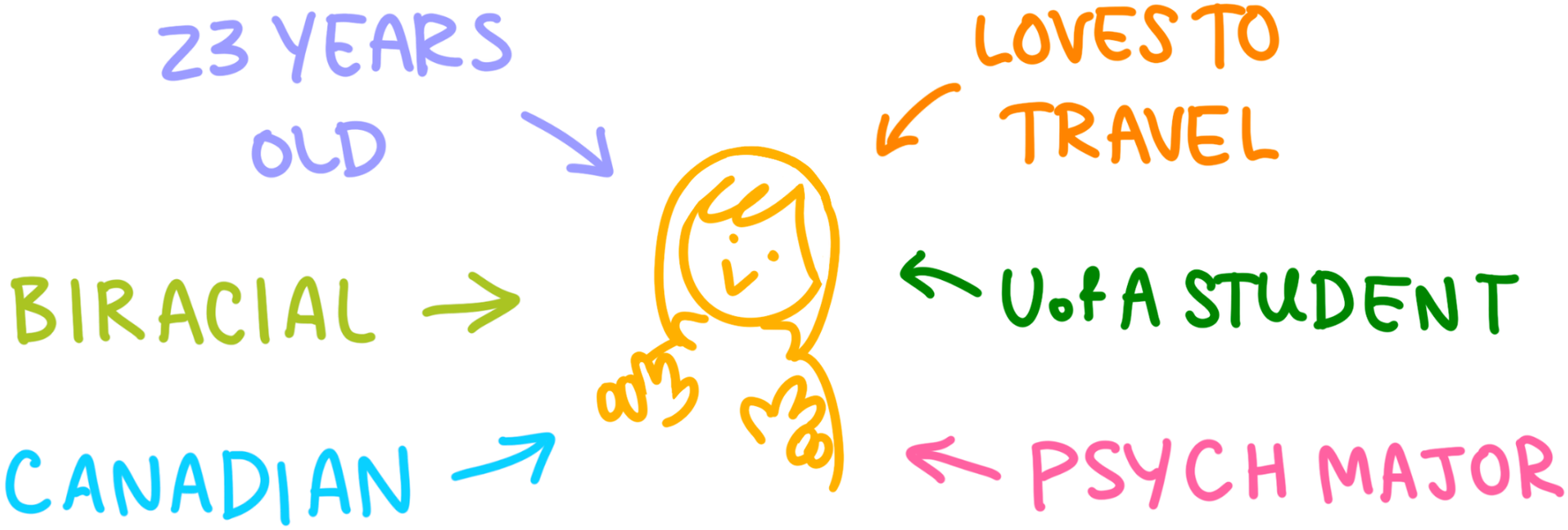
Hello! My name is Augustine, and I'll be talking about my experience getting the Certificate in International Learning (CIL).

We'll discuss who I am as a student, how I tackled the CIL requirements in my own degree, and why I think it's worth it.

1. WHO AM I?
2. CIL EXPERIENCE
   - ↳ FIVE REQUIREMENTS
3. TAKEAWAYS

WHO AM I?

I'm about to graduate from my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology!
Then I'm off to graduate school in the fall 👩‍🎓



The U of A has numerous certificates that can be embedded into your degree, and I chose the CIL because I wanted to embrace the international aspect of going to a Canadian university and experience being a student in a different country.

I had a lot of goals in my undergrad, and the CIL made it easier to achieve them by giving me a direction to work toward.



COOL ELECTIVES!

VOLUNTEERING!





FEDERAL CO-OP!

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION PSYCH LAB!



* no I didn't wear a lab coat but we can pretend cuz it's cool...

Would I have done these things anyway? Probably, but the requirements of the certificate gave me more unique experiences and encouraged me to explore options that I may not have otherwise considered.

CIL EXPERIENCE

There are five requirements to complete the CIL, starting with the online orientation.



MEET STAFF & STUDENTS!

LEARN ABOUT INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION!



MAKE YOUR PLAN!

This is where you learn more about the certificate and make a plan to complete it, it takes around 3 hours and is the first step every CIL student takes in their journey!

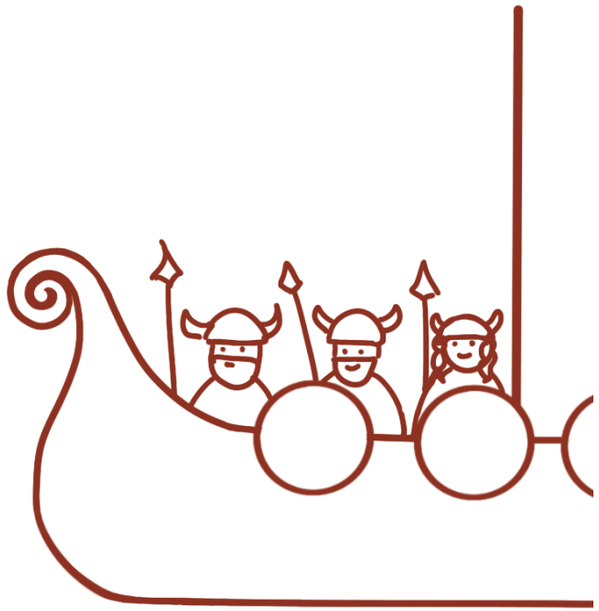
The orientation helped me get to know the program and map things out. Looking back, my path had a lot of changes and that's ok!



In my opinion, it's more important to embrace opportunities as they come up rather than meticulously trying to plan each step.

This brings us to the second requirement: completing 12 CIL-approved global courses at the U of A

The list of potential options are way more than I could possibly name here, but I'll mention two of my favourite electives that were CIL-approved.



SCAND 341/2

Old Norse Mythology and Legends / The Vikings



I took 341 with Dr. Van Deusen because I thought it sounded interesting. I enjoyed it so much that I took 342 and ended up winning an award for the highest mark in Scandinavian coursework that year!

You might find something you unexpectedly really like while working on the CIL :-)

The third, and probably most exciting part for many students, is the Intercultural Experience requirement!



I went on a summer exchange to Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China for a sustainable management course.

I got to experience the culture firsthand and made friends I still keep in touch with today, all while taking a class!

There are so many partner universities, and I think I would've had a great time at any of them. I cherish the experience fondly 💝

The fourth requirement, Co-curricular and Communication, can be completed in a variety of ways. You have to complete two of three options, either earning 10 co-curricular activity points, gaining second language competency, or complete intercultural communication training.

I got most of my co-curricular points through being an airport volunteer over the summer to welcome new international students to the U of A!

I also ran booths and promotions for UAI during the school year, as well as attending guest lectures to learn something new.



Intercultural communication training was an engaging multi-hour event, and it taught me skills to effectively communicate with people of different backgrounds.



The final requirement for the CIL is the creation of a Capstone Project. This is where you reflect on what you learned from completing the various CIL requirements that we discussed earlier!



Most students write a traditional essay for this part, but I got permission to do this little comic instead. It's less of a paper and more like a story of what I'd tell a student considering taking the CIL themselves. Go for it!

TAKE AWAYS

Through my classes, exchange, volunteering, and other CIL experiences, I'm grateful to have expanded my understanding of various culture's perspectives.

I always knew that the way I communicate and see the world isn't a default, but to be able to reinforce it through lived experiences is one of the most valuable things the CIL gave me.

Sitting at tables where English isn't anyone's first language, sharing new stories and food, and making connections with people from around the world are just a few of the unique experiences you might encounter.

I'll keep everything I learned from the CIL with me long after I graduate!


THANK YOU!

CIL Capstone Project Explanation

For my Certificate in International Learning (CIL) Capstone Project, I decided to go the route of making a comic encouraging other students to take the CIL for themselves. This is due to my preference for drawing when given the opportunity, and also because I feel like the format is fun and accessible. Given the nature of the comic and its limited word length, I will elaborate on some of the slides here in order to paint a fuller picture of my experience.

Who am I?: The graduate program I'm pursuing is a Master of Public Policy at McGill University. The international element the CIL added to my degree lines up directly with that program, since public policy work depends on understanding how systems and issues connect across borders, not just within one country.

CIL Experience: It started with the online orientation in September 2022, which is just a chance to meet other students and staff and map out a plan before anything else begins. My CIL journey after that was not a straightforward one, and I emphasize the importance of embracing opportunities as they come up. This doesn't have to apply to only travel or volunteering. Sometimes there might be a lecture in the evening of a random winter semester and you happen to be on campus. It might be easier to go home, but I found that every time I pushed myself to attend events, I got something out of it, like a lunchtime reading with Tasha Beeds and Rita Wong that left me thinking differently about how connected local and global issues are.

Regarding courses, I took quite a few that qualified for the CIL, and they all taught me to think in different ways. Other than SCAND 341/342 (which I highlighted because they were the most memorable for me), I also took various Native Studies and Philosophy classes. They helped round out my degree, because despite being a Bachelor of Arts student, I primarily took my psychology classes through the Sciences when given the option later in my degree.

Part of the reason I went with this non-traditional format is that I just recently completed a reflection on my time at Zhejiang University. In the reflection, I discuss the details of my trip itself, such as travelling to Shanghai, trying on Hanfu, and all the other activities I did outside of class. Travelling and being immersed in a culture are expected from an international exchange, but I didn't realize how important the connections I made would become. This is why I mention it as a main focus of the slide, as the friendships I made ultimately ended up being the most enriching part of the exchange for me.

For co-curricular and communication, I earned most of my points volunteering as an airport welcome ambassador, meeting new international students as they landed and helping them find their way to campus. A few of my international colleagues on the volunteer team told me they had been welcomed by the same program in their own first year, and they were volunteering now hoping to be that person for someone else. Hearing that made me realize why the volunteer team itself looked the way it did, international and domestic students working the same shifts, for their own versions of the same reason, without anyone assigning it that way.

Takeaways: Looking back, the same lesson kept showing up in different forms across the certificate. A reading on resource extraction here in Edmonton and a course on sustainability on the other side of the world in China were making the same point about local and global issues being more connected than they look. Hangzhou and the airport volunteering reinforced a related lesson closer to home, that the way I communicate and see the world is one culture's approach among several equally good ones, not some default everyone else is measured against. I know how much effort the International team at the University of Alberta puts into running the CIL, and I'm so glad I completed it!