

I didn't know it at the time, but my transition from a small Alberta town of 200 people to the city of Edmonton would be one of my first brushes with culture shock and intercultural learning. It's my now my understanding that the process of international learning is not simply a matter of learning more about the world, but rather learning about one's self. Today, I cannot imagine an identity for myself without intercultural learning and experiences being a part of my daily life. A single paper will not allow me to incorporate every point of growth I have experienced over the past four years, however I am able to highlight what these experiences have meant to me. Three areas of growth are worth special mention, in that they will stay with me for life and facilitate experiences which have become important to me. The first is the ability to seek out and recognize what intercultural knowledge is and appreciate the inherent benefits it brings to a person's life. The second is the ability to share this learned knowledge with others by applying tools learned and cultural sensitivity. Last, these experiences have reinforced my idea of diversity in life and helped me develop resilience in the face of change. This document aims to highlight these experiences in the context of the Certificate of International Learning and having met its various components. To achieve this, I will be referring to my experiences from academic learning, working with ESL students, participating in internationally focused events, and attendance of an intercultural training event.

Although my academic background is rooted in Environmental studies, I have actively sought out internationally focused classes during my undergraduate to expand my knowledge of the world in general. My participation in these classes has rewarded me in ways that expand far beyond the classroom and is where I first developed a desire to expand my knowledge in internationally focused topics. For example, one class related to the politics of Japan and China gave me the academic context needed to make connections to topics I had already encountered on a personal level. Although I had traveled to China in the past and developed personal connections, it was only upon studying the historical and political developments in an academic setting I was able to appreciate why I experienced some of the cultural events I did. In relation to my passion rooted in environmental issues, my academic studies have also provided context for why we have some of the global problems we have today. At the same time it also has provided various globally focused solutions to these issues. Examples of this can be found in many of the topics discussed throughout my academic career, however there is no topic that has had a larger impact in this regard than global warming. This topic in itself fosters global consciousness and a desire to partake in a global effort to solve an important issue. Although it could be argued there have been more losses than wins to date on this topic, my education and participation in this global community leaves me hopeful that we will achieve great things. Aside from the times I

have actively sought out international content I am also thankful for the inclusion of internationally focused content passively in many areas of my studies. An example of this can be found in some of my natural science classes which deal with the maintenance of natural systems, all the while stressing how international policies and issues impact any local efforts. In the end I believe that my participation in international topics has simply been an extension of my involvement with environmental issues. This is due to the fact that both are reliant upon each other and to be effective in either field you must have the utmost understanding and respect of the other.

Although the academic requirement of this certificate is important in developing a thirst for global issues and topics, I believe it is through my intercultural employment that I have changed the most. I have worked at MacEwan University for 7 years in various positions, while spending the majority of time working with international students and newcomers to Canada. I first began to understand the complexity of immigration when I first met a student who had a PhD in their home country and was working as a walmart greeter as they put themselves through upgrading here. In the case of newcomers to Canada I quickly learnt that it is the everyday language skills I take for granted that will allow or bar somebody from participating in society. Furthermore, it was in my interactions with these communities over a prolonged time that I have been able to develop intercultural strategies for speaking with those of another language. In addition to the complexity of language, I also have developed a great respect for social norms as a result of this work. For example, I have dealt with people who have never used a banking system as we have in Canada, or perhaps have special religious considerations that impact their school attendance. In addition to supporting these students in whatever ways I could within my role and the learning I gained through this participation, I also have taken away learning to apply to those in my own culture. For example, within my own social network I have both friends and family who generally represent "Canadian ideal's" on both progressive and non-progressive topics. There have been times where somebody has presented a less than fair generalization on a topic and I have been able to provide both academic and personal context in response to these claims. I have experienced that although academic merit provides a foundation to build understanding, it is personal connection which brings somebody from being informed to being educated.

The next big portion of my intercultural learning came from participation in extracurricular events throughout my degree, as well as a workshop. It was through some participation in an environmental lecture series that I first experienced co-curricular learning for international topics. Starting with large social advocates such as Paul Hawken and David Suzuki I experienced the awe and diverse learning that come from a single good

lecture. I went on to attend a variety of other talks and events ranging from the conflict in Ukraine, to cleaning up Fukushima, to discussing photos of how humans impact the global physical landscape. Although each of these events had their own unique topic and presentation style, there is no mistaking that each was aimed at expanding minds. It is essential to point out that this is not limited to technical knowledge, but also focused on the process of learning about and appreciating our world as a whole connected system. In attending the intercultural communication workshop for this certificate, I was surprised to leave realizing I have multiple identities that form me as a whole. Furthermore I can apply this to international experiences in some identities I take for granted many that I derive power from. In addition to the technical skills I left the workshop with in regards to intercultural communication, I also met a variety of different people and made meaningful connections across different cultural boundaries.

I would be lying if I said that finishing my degree was not a scary prospect for me as I, like most, do not know what the future has in store. What I can say however is that though my participation in this certificate I have found knowledge and passions previously unknown to me. Furthermore I have gained the tools necessary to help me explore the world around me. The things I take away from this experience leave me looking forward to the future and confident in my ability to interact with the world. In summary, I am grateful to this certificate and the University for the chance to recognize this important part of my life and fostering the beginning of what I hope is more great things to come.