

Global Competency Reflective Essay

Kailee Duncan

My name is Kailee Duncan. I am from the Stelat'en First Nation and I grew up in the Village of Fraser Lake. I am currently in my fourth year of university here at TRU, and am planning to graduate next year in the spring. I value education and in my experience, the best learning has come from my first hand global experiences. I have been searching for cultural exposure, but mainly trying to cross off countries on my list. I've learned now that it is not about how many places you get to see, it is about how many people you connect with, and what your experience with that culture and landscape means to you. I believe that in order to better understand a different culture, it is important to submerge yourself into that culture to get first hand experiences. Seeing and being on location is learning and understanding at a higher level. The global classroom is the best place to learn about global issues and cultures. Experiential learning includes hand on learning but also incorporates a reflective observation, analysis of the experience, linking ideas to current knowledge and understanding, and finally understand how to apply your learning for future use.

Self Empowerment

Travelling globally solo has allowed me to gain a strong sense of self empowerment. Especially when travelling solo as a female, there are certain challenges and concerns that you need to be aware of and prepared for. The biggest skill that I have learned through my global experiences is flexibility, and having the ability to deal with the ambiguity that often comes along with travel. On my travels, I have lost many important articles in airports, and I have had to deal with multiple delays, changing schedules, and the anxiety of not knowing what is going to happen next. All of these travel related setbacks have taught me to not let these unfortunate but unchangeable things get me down. Learning to go with the flow more often than not, and having the skills to mitigate the challenges that we face has been very impactful on my life. Being flexible and having the ability to cope with ambiguity is an important skill to possess when working in a culturally diverse environment. I utilize and enhance this skill when working with a diverse group of students in my courses. Before doing any solo travel, I was afraid of the idea and thought it was impossible for me to do. My biggest self empowering moment was when I got on the biggest plane I have ever seen, and moved away to a country across the globe that I had virtually no knowledge on. The feelings that I was experiencing during this moment were primarily fear, hesitation, and excitement. The negative feelings started to slide away somewhere over the Pacific Ocean. When I arrived in Brisbane, Australia, I felt like the entire world was in the palm of my hand and that if I could move to the other side of the world by myself, I could really do anything.

Cultural Exposure & Knowledge Exchange

While living in Australia for my study abroad semester I got the amazing opportunity to live with a local family in the Gold Coast. Living with locals really gave me the chance to experience day to day living in this completely new and strange country. I really got to see the culture up close and personal. I was able to share stories and photos with them to share my culture. When I moved back to Canada, I had the opportunity to participate in two indigenous exchanges which really developed my appreciation for cultural travel. I went to Mexico in 2018, and then to both Australia and New Zealand in 2019. When in Australia, I got to travel back to places I had been before during my study abroad, but I got to have new experiences and a cultural exposure that I did not have access to previously. We got a traditional welcome to the land, and I got to experience the locations through a traditional lens. This gave me the

ability to truly connect with the land, the water, and the people, which in turn gave me a better understanding of the culture. I was absolutely amazed and also saddened by the shared experiences of indigenous peoples in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. All of our people are trying to heal from the present effects and issues of colonization, these indigenous based meetings were an amazing opportunity to come together to heal, exchange knowledge, and grow stronger. I have developed a greater knowledge on other cultural world views, ways of knowing and living. I have learned a lot about traditional Indigenous knowledge from near and far. There are many similarities within different Indigenous cultures across the globe. There are also unique differences that create opportunities to share this knowledge.

New Passions

Life isn't about finding yourself, it's about creating yourself. My cultural and global experiences have opened my eyes to what is truly important to me. I have a better idea on what I need to focus my time, energy and love into, and what to let go. I have accumulated new passions during my global experiences. I have a new found passion for traditional art, cultural travel, and language revitalization.

Through this journey of global learning, I have accumulated the skills to weave grass baskets, string shell jewelry, bead and sew moccasins, and string a moose hide drum. These are traditional artworks from a mix of Indigenous cultures. Learning the importance and significance behind the artworks themselves and being able to create it myself has taught me patience, dedication, and about self-reflection. These types of traditional art can take many hours to complete.

I want to participate in cultural travel with the purpose of understanding and relating to people of other cultures, languages, and lands. During the cultural travel I have done, I have learned to adapt my communication style to more effectively communicate with others of different cultures. How we communicate with each other is meaningful and culturally significant. Having travelled to nine other countries, I have had to adjust my style of communication and in some cases languages. I know have a better understanding and many first hand experiences of intercultural communication. In one particular debriefing session in New Zealand, I learned that generally as a culture the Maori do not share in depth feelings, whereas the groups from Canada and the USA were sharing a lot of emotion. I am now able to identify why intercultural communication is significant and I can now apply that to my communications degree. I understand communications from a global perspective, and I want to build up my cultural fluency.

I am very interested in language revitalization. Hearing other mother tongue languages being spoken during my global experiences has inspired me to learn my own traditional Dakelh language. Due to the severe effects of colonization on my people, culture, traditions, and language, I unfortunately was unable to be taught how to speak my traditional language. Before going on the Indigenous exchanges I felt guilty and ashamed for not knowing my language. After seeing that other indigenous people are on many different stages in their cultural and self identity journey, I learned that it is not about how much you do or do not know, it is about the effort you put in to learn. I know that I do not have to feel guilty over something that was not my fault, but it is my responsibility to start learning and ask questions. It is up to me and my generation to continue to speak the language and revitalize our culture. I will work towards decolonizing my life in all aspects, personal and professional.

A Clearer Path

I think that my new passions have helped me discover more of who I am and inspired a vision of how I want to live the rest of my life. I am solid in my identity, I know who I am. I do not need any validation or acceptance from others to know where I come from, who my family is, and what my values are. I want my career in Communications to be related to intercultural communicating, and the bridging of shared understanding between cultures. Creating a stronger self identity makes me feel more ready to take on a clearer educational and career path. I think that I possess unique skills from my global learning that will make me stand out from others, and get the attention of future employers. First hand real life experiences in dealing with stressful situations such as trying to find your way around Beijing without speaking mandarin and a dead cellphone, and being able to handle challenges successfully gives me a competitive edge. I have acquired these new skills that I am able to take into the workforce as well as my future travels. Global learning has altered my education, self-identity, and career paths. As a person, I am more confident and self assured. I have new passions and goals, I want to learn more about other cultures as well as my own, I have been inspired to begin a language revitalization in my community, and I am a more accepting and empathetic person in regards to diversity. I have gained skills to be able to create traditional art.