

# Exchange Report

By Brooke Nelson

Bachelor of Primary Education

Charles Sturt University, Bathurst->  
University of Regina, Canada



# Introduction

- Hello, my name is Brooke Nelson and I am studying a Bachelor of Primary Education at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst Australia.
- During September- December of 2007 I joined the exchange program and studied at the University of Regina in Canada.
- The following is some information about the program and what you need to know before embarking on your journey.



# Pre-departure

- The best piece of advice that I can give you is to get organised for your trip as soon as possible!
- Student visa- This is worthwhile if you want a health care card whilst in Canada and if you want to get a job on campus. This takes about six weeks to receive and costs \$125. Make sure that when you get to customs in Canada that you show your letter for the student visa and they will then know to issue you one. I found that although I applied for my health care card when arriving in Canada I was not issued one until two weeks before I was to leave.
- If you are doing any practical work with children whilst on exchange the Canadian Consulate will want you to have a full medical examination- blood tests and X-rays which can be quite pricey. However if you are only carrying out a small amount of practical work you should be able to negotiate this, as this medical procedure mainly applies to international people who are planning on working with children full time.



- You will also need a Criminal Record check to work with children- a child protection certificate does not count. You can get a Criminal Record check in Australia and then Canada (if necessary) or you may be able to sort out an agreement. For instance, I did practical work in an Elementary school so I had to go to the Regina School Board and sign a declaration stating that I have not committed any crimes in my lifetime.
- Passport- allow plenty of time to get this organised as it takes about a month to process.
- Have plans for if things do not pan out as they are supposed to. For instance, have alternative classes to take, alternative accommodation, as this will save you a lot of hassle.
- I found out that I was accepted into the program for sure about two months before leaving. Make sure you are prepared for everything as the time goes so quickly and there is a lot to think about!



# Travel

- The travel agency at Harvey World Travel in Bathurst was excellent and very helpful in booking my flights and my tour.
- I went through Air Canada which was comfortable and friendly. This cost about \$2600 return Sydney- Vancouver. There are probably cheaper flights available if you go through Student Flights, but at the time of booking, this price was quite competitive as compared to other companies.
- It is a good idea to make yourself familiar with flight requirements and procedures. For example- no sharp objects in hand luggage, any liquids in hand luggage needs to be placed in a clear zip lock bag and cannot be over 100ml. Medications, such as asthma puffers etc may need to be shown as well. I had a letter from my doctor outlining the purpose of my medication.
- Although it is tempting, try not to pack too much as I had a maximum load coming to Canada which meant that I could not buy as many things while I was there. You are usually allowed two large pieces of luggage (up to approximately 20kgs each). However, consider how you are going to move these by yourself, especially when first arriving in a new country it may be a bit of a struggle.



# Insurance

- I got travel insurance as it is definitely worthwhile to know that you are covered if anything happens. I got this through Harvey World Travel. The basic cover was about \$700, the total coverage was about \$900.



# Campus

- Accommodation- It is probably best to live on campus during exchange as it really lets you get into the atmosphere of university life. The choices are- College West, New Residence (North & South), Luther College, Campion College or the Language Institute.
- I stayed in College West which I found was really great. I stayed in a two-storey apartment with three other girls. The College West building is older than other campuses but I found it fine to live in. There is a TV room on some of the floors and internet access in your room- all you have to do is get the connection cord when you arrive at the university. College West is also very multicultural; I lived with girls from China, Bangladesh and Canada, which I found was valuable to me as I was able to learn about other cultures.
- In my room I had a desk, a bed, a wardrobe, 2 bookshelves and an air conditioner.



- In some of the residences there is a kitchen with an oven, fridge and plenty of shelf space. Extra appliances are often brought in by others who live there, that you will surely be able to use- microwave, kettle, rice cooker. I found that cooking for myself suited me. The university even offered bus trips to the supermarket once a fortnight which was handy.
- Another option is to get a meal card. You have a choice of putting a large amount on the card such as \$200/ \$500 or you can put a smaller amount like \$50 and add to it as you go. The food court on campus was quite good except the opening hours did not always please everyone, eg. There is nothing open on the weekend until 11am. Some of the choices included-
  - Sandwiches, wraps, sushi, burgers, salads, soup, muffins, chips, bacon and egg breakfast, fruit cups, pasta, stir fry. Etc.



## Gym

- The gym was free for all students and was awesome! It is large with all the necessary equipment and a track. It is usually busy and you must sign up for machines before you use them. The UR fit program also offers various classes for around \$50 per semester. These include- step, pump, yoga, cycle, dancing- salsa, hip-hop, belly dancing.

## Buildings

This campus is quite large and has all of the buildings joined together for your convenience (this is especially great in the freezing weather!)

You should become familiar with where your classes are before they begin to avoid that extra hassle.

There are a few libraries on campus, the biggest is the Archer library which is 6 floors high.

In the centre of the university there is the big green which they sometimes hold events at, such as bands.



# Weather

- It got very cold while I was there, and it was only Fall and the beginning of Winter! The coldest it was when I was there was about -35 degrees celcius!!! There is plenty of snow around which is beautiful but be careful not to slip! You must wear multiple layers and a winter jacket and make sure that you always have set plans when going out in the weather.(eg transportation). It is awful going out late at night to niteclubs etc, some of the lines trail outside so it is a good idea to either go early before the rush or rug up!



# Subject List

(3rd Year Primary Ed.)

Australia	Canada
EMA312 Creative Arts Curriculum 2	EAES 215 Introduction to Arts Education
EMS312 Science & Technology Curriculum 2	ESCI215 Introduction to Teaching of Elementary School Science
[       ] Elective	EDAN101 Introduction to Dance Education, K-12, Part I
[       ] Elective	EPS215 Principles and Practices of Elementary Teaching



# Classes

- I found that the classes seemed to have a lighter workload than I was used to which was good.
- Make sure all of your classes match up appropriately and have alternatives just in case.
- Laptop very handy or you can use the computer lab- there are many on campus.



# Expenses

- Approximate prices (AUD):
  - Airfare- \$2600
  - Travel Insurance- \$900
  - Accommodation- \$2000
  - Food- \$800
  - Text books- \$200

The exchange rate when I went over was AUD \$1:  
.80c CA so it was quite reasonable.

Where to get a bargain: Dollarama, Safeway  
discount card, Value Village.

# Holiday Travel

- Definitely travel to see the sights of Canada.
- I went on an organised tour: Vancouver- Whistler- Banff (Rocky Mountains)- Calgary- Regina. I also went to Edmonton on the way back to Australia and spent some extra time in Vancouver.
- My flight stopped in Hawaii on the way over, however we were only permitted to stay in the airport.



# Transport

Bus

\$2.10- ask for a transfer. #3 and #4 go to the university.

The closest supermarket is Sobey's which is a 15 minute walk from uni, or you can choose to get the bus to and from there.



# Social Activities

- Sporting clubs, dance clubs, religion clubs, etc.
- There were many activities organised by the International Student Success Office for those on exchange. Activities included dinners, tours, pumpkin carving (halloween), pizza Thursday. This was beneficial in meeting other students also on exchange.
- There are many niteclubs and parties to attend. The niteclub on campus can get quite busy, especially on Friday nights.



# Cell Phone

- I thought I would miss my phone but it was fine not taking it- I found that using the apartment phone and email or facebook was good enough.
- I could have changed to a network in Canada but this seemed to be an unnecessary expense. In Canada you are charged to call someone as well as when receiving a call and talking to someone that has called you. So the phone bill can get quite high.



# Bank

- I did not join a bank in Canada while I was there, however it may be a good idea in order to avoid \$10 transaction fees from withdrawing internationally.
- I got a Visa debit passport card from the travel agent which worked almost everywhere.



# Culture

- Although Canada is not too different to Australia when first arriving you will probably experience a culture shock due to the different accent, words used, landscape and protocols such as tipping and paying the added tax on items.
- I found that there was a small language barrier with the words used however they are quite easy to get used to. For instance bunny hug= jumper.
- Be open minded to the culture and to those you meet from other international cultures. You may get asked 'interesting' questions about kangaroos etc and you will have to get used to the 'Put another shrimp on the barbie!' Because trust me you will hear it frequently.
- I found that it was important to talk about Australia and inform others that you meet about the culture, just as you should find out about the Canadian culture and other cultures while you are there. There seem to be many stereotypes and assumptions of various cultures so you can imagine that these types of conversations can be beneficial for all.



# What to bring

- You should bring necessities only as you may want to buy things while you are there. I found it nice to bring photos from home and put them up in my room, Australian things like a flag, bring mug and plate to get you started in the kitchen department.
- You can hire sheets for the first week of uni for free but anytime after that it is \$10 per week. I had my doona sent over to me, however you may like to just bring a sleeping bag with you if convenient. There is an air conditioner in every room which is really good so don't worry about being too hot/cold.

# Handy things to buy

- Laundry card- you will need this for washing and drying. You load money onto the card in the laundry card machine in residence.
- Copeze Card- This is used for photocopying. You can load money onto the card in the machine in the Archer library.
- International phone card- \$5/ \$10 and are good value.



# Relationships

- I found that it was difficult to get homesick due to how friendly and supportive the people were. Just stay positive and put yourself out there and it is amazing how many friends you will make.
- Keep in contact with family and friends in Australia through phone, email and facebook.
- It is hard to say goodbye to all of the friends that you make while abroad. Make sure you cherish every moment and stay positive- you made it overseas this time to meet all these great people, why can't you organise to meet up again? Whether it be in Canada, Australia or another country.
- That said, make sure you stay in touch with your new friends and get their details.

# Do it!

- Overall I found this experience amazing and valuable to me not only personally but professionally in that I have had the opportunity to gain broader experience and perspectives on teaching.
- You have nothing to lose when going on exchange. It provides a chance for:
  - Academic development
  - Travel
  - Cultural awareness
  - Social life
  - Personal growth
  - Future employment opportunities

