

Bernadette Moorhead – Exchange to University of Regina, Canada in 2008



My exchange experience began on an ordinary day, during a social work lecture in 2006. Our class was visited briefly by a staff member from the CSU exchange department. She talked to us about exchange opportunities and how to make it happen. Up until that point I had only flirted with the idea of doing exchange, but dismissed it as I thought it would be too expensive. Fortunately, I was proven wrong!!! Curiosity got the better of me, and after a quick chat about budgets and scholarships I was hooked. Next thing I knew, I was flying to the University of Regina (UoR), Canada with a friend from class for the Fall Semester in 2007. It is known as Prairie country and you can see miles ahead due to the awesome flat terrain. If you get a chance, check out the TV show *Corner Gas* for a better idea (filmed right near Regina)! Although, the most interesting part was experiencing (or surviving, depending on how you want to look at it) minus 40 in Winter! I had the pleasure of living on campus in one of the “Towers”. I stayed in a single room, which worked well as I was able to have good privacy. The university offers a range of accommodation arrangements and for those travelling on their own I would recommend sharing in order to make meeting people a little easier. As well as regular on and off campus activities the University offered fantastic support and events for international students. It was within this environment that I developed friendships with fellow students and people from diverse backgrounds including Mexico, Korea, Japan and the US. We were even able to fit in a couple of road trips, as Canadians love to have holidays.. To us it seemed that they would only take down holiday decorations in order to put ones up for the next one. This meant having the opportunity to share a traditional thanksgiving meal and dressing up for the first time for trick or treating during Halloween. My friend and I were the only adults going out asking for Candy for that night. We came back with a huge stash as no one could say no to some Aussie girls dressed as a hippie and Kangaroo! Altogether I spent 6 months overseas. Half of this was spent studying, the other travelling! During this time I went to places that I never expected to, such as Mexico and the United States. Not only did exchange provide opportunities to travel and see North America, but I was able to develop lasting networks with social workers. In fact, my friend who I travelled with has recently gone back and plans to work in Regina. Despite common perception, participating in exchange is easier than thought. All it took was a little organisation and planning. Was it stressful? Yeah, at times, but the benefits far outweigh it all. Not only did my confidence flourish, I made life long friends from countries all over the world and had the opportunity to develop my travel legs. For me, the best part was getting out there and experiencing the diversity of life. All it took was one decision that ended up being incredibly easy to make. It has changed my life and I can now take these experiences with me into the future, especially as I enter the workforce. Employers love to know you have travelled and had diverse experiences. Honestly, it is difficult to clearly put into words just how wonderfully life changing student exchange is. The only way to really find out is to give it a go. If you have ever entertained the idea of doing exchange, do yourself a favour and talk to some CSU staff. It is only 10 minutes out of your life, and you never know where you may end up!

