



### **Daniel Simpson – Exchange to Trent University, Canada in 2009**

Before leaving for my International Exchange, many people asked me why I chose Canada. I heard “it is the same as Australia, just with snow” often and began to question my choice as well. I desperately wanted to try something different to push me out of my comfort zone and learn about the world. That is why I was surprised when I arrived at Toronto airport in September 2009, where the sun was shining forcing me to peel off the jacket I wore on the plane. All the international students met at the airport and were whisked away (on the wrong side of the road) in a typical North American yellow school bus for a three day camp. The camp opened us up to Canadian culture and allowed the foundations of some strong friendships to be laid. Whilst canoeing, rock climbing and over the camp fire, people from over 50 countries around the world were able to share stories about their homeland and the hopes and fears for their new life in Canada.

Once at Trent University, I was able to settle into campus life after a swearing in dinner and ceremony at Champlain College. Similar to Hogwarts (with Champlain being Gryffindor of course), the college became a community in which we were all involved. Nights out together, barracking for the lacrosse team and afternoon barbecues all rounded out the spring, before the weather began to turn. Many of my classes were within Champlain, but I often had to walk across the icy bridge connecting the campus to the other colleges as well. This became difficult as winter and -30 degree temperatures set in and being swept off the bridge by the strong winds was always at the back of my mind. Snow turned the university white and negotiating the paths became a major challenge, even whilst trying to walk to lunch or dinner. Catching the bus during a snow storm, which used to slide around the town, was definitely an experience I won't forget!

Studying in Canada was a fantastic opportunity for me as an allied health student. I was able to compare the course to what I was learning back in Australia and was able to take away many different perspectives on particular issues. I was fortunate enough to be offered a placement in a Canadian health service and spent two days a week working with different health professionals and patients from many backgrounds. Swapping stories about the weather in Canada and Australia became a regular occurrence and lots of the patients liked to guess where my accent was from and were particularly interested in learning about kangaroos and koalas! I made some of my closest friends during these times and forged networks with some of my professors of whom I still have regular contact. I even ran into a hospital educator who grew up and trained with one of the lecturers here at CSU.

The highlight of my exchange was definitely travelling with 15 other international students during our weekends and holidays. Over Thanksgiving, we hired cars and travelled east from our University to the Quebec Province. Once in Montreal we had to put our limited French speaking skills to the test to find our way around the city and to order food and drinks. Further along the road, in Quebec City, we were able to meander up and down the cobble stone streets and take in the very European feel of the city. After a great week in Canada, we all decided to escape the freezing cold for the Caribbean sun drenched Cuba. Cocktails on the beach, music in the air and parasailing on the water

took up a lot of our time, as did visiting the special sites in La Habana. I learnt more about the history of Cuba and the revolution in that week than during my entire schooling years.

My exchange to Canada opened up my eyes to the rest of the world. By being surrounded by people from so many different countries in the international program, I was able to experience so much in such a short 4 month period. The skills I learnt and the friendships I formed will stay with me for the rest of my life and I can only recommend for everyone to give it a go. What have you got to lose?