

Global competency is not something we are born with or something we can wake up with one day. Instead, the road to global competency is a journey and one with no definitive ending. It is achieved by creating a mosaic of life experiences that when stitched together, showcase a diverse and colourful representation of the cultural views, ideas and beliefs one has gained.

My path towards global competency started at a young age. My parents always loved travelling and they instilled their sense of adventure in me. In 2007, we immigrated to Canada from the UK. We did not know anyone and had only previously visited the country for a week. Together, we gained a lot of resiliency and tolerance for ambiguity. After ten years in this country, we became Canadian citizens. Studying for the test, preparing for interviews and celebrating our ceremony gave me a lot of respect for the new country I would be calling home as well as for other immigrants around the world. Our journey towards dual citizenship was long but with it came a great sense of pride and a better appreciation and understanding for those that were different from us. Wanting to grow this even more, in 2015 I went on a ME to WE voluntourism trip to Los Campos, Nicaragua where I helped to build a classroom. The experience was majorly eye-opening and I gained a new perspective, and appreciation for the privilege that came with my British and Canadian upbringing. The region had a high incidence of child labour and the children that could go to school were required to walk extremely long and dangerous routes. As a volunteer, I learned about education system differences around the world and I gained insight into what it takes to help make a difference. Most of all, the experience inspired me to always show concern and empathy for the places I visit. Upon my high school graduation the following year, I knew that I needed to experience some sort of growth like this again. Unlike my peers who applied for post-secondary, I had no desire to go to university. I felt that I could learn more by being abroad than sitting in a classroom. So instead, I left for a three-month backpacking trip around Southeast Asia. This

trip ended up being more impactful than I ever could have imagined. I visited religious temples, took part in cooking classes and stayed in hostel rooms with strangers from all over the world. Not only did I acquire knowledge and insights into cultures that I had never been around before, but I gained a new appreciation for learning. I made a commitment to myself that I would no longer just visit places and gaze upon their issues. My views shifted immensely, as now I wanted to be able to interact with and impact the world on a deeper level. This newfound desire to understand more about our world and invest in my own growth led to me starting the Bachelor of Tourism Management at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) the following year. My passion for travel and experiencing new cultures has shone through during my time at TRU. In 2018, I was part of the Student Work Experience Program (SWEP) at Fairmont Banff Springs. During my time working at the prestigious hotel, not only did I interact with guests from all over the world but the team that I worked alongside was extremely multicultural. This aspect of my time at Fairmont was extremely rewarding for me, as for the first time I gained expertise in working alongside different cultures in a professional setting. I gained intercultural communication skills, a higher level of patience, as well as an understanding of different cultural work ethics. Another impactful experience during my time at TRU has been my study abroad term at Management Centre Innsbruck (MCI) in Innsbruck, Austria. The semester revealed new perspectives and again, an entirely new culture that I had never been around. What really spoke to me during that semester was how differently learning is conducted in other nations. Although I was part of a practically identical program there than I am in at TRU, the perspective that the lessons and teachers took was very new to me. At TRU and in North American education in general, we seem to have quite an internal focus on what and how we teach. For the most part, our lessons revolve around Canadian examples and issues whereas, in Austria, I was exposed to a far more global style of teaching. For example, one of my

courses was called International Tourism Markets and it was taught by three international professors. One shared their knowledge and expertise on international tourism insights in the United Arab Emirates, the other on China and the third on India. We learned about their respective countries' historic developments, cultural differences, distinct consumer behaviours, marketing implications and their opportunities for future tourism growth.

Additional to the courses teaching me about other cultures, this also came from building close relationships with the people I met. From having German and Brazilian housemates to making friends from a variety of backgrounds, this resulted in me gaining extensive knowledge and appreciation for different nations' cultural norms, humour, food and education. I found it so incredible and unexpected that during my time in Austria I learned so much about other nations and other cultures, along with Austria's. During my time in Innsbruck, I learned to shift my way of thinking from using a Canadian lens to using a more globally conscious lens.

From my experiences abroad, my work experience in a hotel and my time at TRU, I have recognized the importance of being globally competent in this rapidly changing world. As migration and world connectivity increases, we can no longer be ignorant of the views, beliefs and opinions of other cultures. As someone who is aspiring for a career in the tourism industry, this is even more crucial as I want to have effective and empathetic interactions with the people I work with and the people I am promoting travel to. Despite starting my global competency mosaic at an early age, it has grown and blossomed immensely in the last few years due to the cultural skills, knowledge and perspectives that I have gained from my experiences. I will strive to continue my own journey towards global awareness while encouraging others around me to seek the same.