

Vancouver Island University

Thanks to Ivalo & Minik Fonden, my dream came true.

I went to Vancouver Island University to study one semester. My goal was to improve my English and journalism skills. Honestly I came back to Greenland, with a luggage full with resources and tools, to make a difference.

I experienced a life-changing journey, where I learned a lot about myself, and I definitely improved my English language, and I became more confident to take chances and to speak the language. My voyage helped me to find my path. Professionally and personally I became stronger, wiser, wealthier within with different kinds of the local's stories.

One of my goals was to see how the radio stations and reporters work.

I visited Nanaimo's local radio station CHLY 101.7, and CBC radio station, which is based in Victoria. They were inspiring, and we made a great connection, and we hope to work together in the future.

The pride that I have as a first student from Greenland is, when you enter the international building at VIU, you will see Greenlandic flag waving in the air, with other flags from around the world. The staff hung our flag Erfalasorput during this summer.

My journey began at the end of December. I spent the first week on the Island to getting to know the culture and the locals. I walked around the university area and downtown, and I was surprised to see how polite and accommodating people are.

Vancouver Island University's spring courses began 4. January.

My courses were First Nations, Digital Media, and Creative Writing Journalism.

First Nations studies were from a variety of Indigenous perspectives, of a range of social, economic, political, and cultural questions significant to both Indigenous and non- Indigenous people. This course is a double course, and met twice a week. My classmates and I had about an hour-long lectures and

after that we had seminars. The lectures can be difficult because of the dark history still remains on the First Nations nowadays and the colonization's impact is still on First Nations people. The reason for the seminars after the lectures was discussions about things we heard and learned. The teachers always reminded us of self-care, which showed the course could trigger someone. My teachers were Dr. Keith Smith and Dr. Laura Cranmer. The readings we had were twice a week, and during the semester we wrote four summaries with commentaries. I even learned more about my own culture during my First Nations course, because of the searching for Inuit stories and beliefs; therefore I went deeper on my background, so I could tell my teachers and classmates about my Greenlandic history. I made a scrapbook and companion paper about who made me who I am today, and the research began from Inuit people's stories to my parents. The theme was Mother of the sea, which was one of my ancestor's great beliefs. The purpose was to show how we know our own background and bloodlines.

On Digital Media, I had Alanna Williams. During the course I learned about the history and development of media, and its impact on people. I made 5 different webpages. Then for my last exam I made five minutes short film, the content of it was individual decision. The story I made was about Indigenous people's way of seeing life in modern society.

In Creative Writing Journalism; we learned the basics of journalism. Our instructor Richard Dunstan had his last class before he retiring. He was the editor and reporter in the local newspaper "Daily News". He taught us about the rules, ethics, way of writing in journalism, and he usually came up with example of his years long experience with the news. The assignments the classmates and I made are obviously about the news. My last and major news was about men's unwritten rule: Men are not supposed to cry. They are meant to be strong warriors without emotion and be confident and stoic. Then I interviewed a counsellor in Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre, about his experiences and knowledge of men.

Studying at VIU was an incredible learning experience. I made connections with elders from the university, which was a big gift. They taught me about their cultures and traditions. There were many times where we shared stories, and build trust and understanding between two different histories about traditions and cultures. The university staff was very supportive and encouraging, so I got strengthen to push myself harder, especially on the assignments and midterm and final exams.

Wonders of the island

My journey was not only about books and study. Vancouver Island University has weekend activities and it has one or two university staff as guides. I had many amazing experiences to explore what the island has to offer.

First I visited beautiful Victoria's downtown along with the big museum. Inside and outside of the museum there were totem poles that symbol the culture of the First Nations.

Next journey was on the Mount Washington, where I first tried snowshoeing. The mountain was so majestic with its trees and fresh fallen snow, which I never seen before.

Then I went caving in Parksville, BC's Horne Lake Caves.

That was quite something. There were three different caves, where the staff told us about the stories about them. The patience and calmness was on the test when the caves get too tied.

I visited Tofino twice and I saw incredible rainforests and beaches. I remember during the first trip, when I saw a bald eagle so close and it was magnificent and majestic moment. The eagle made me and other girls just laugh and cheer up. After our long walk, the fire outside was lightened up, and then we shared our cultures and traditions while we melted marshmallows, like real Canadians.

Making connections

I talked with as many people as I could, and I visited places I could not imagine that I would be able to see and experience.

One of the most priceless moments was connecting to the local people, making new friends, and the way the new people I have met were surprised to

hear where I came from. During the conversations most of them want to go to Greenland and experience the magnificent nature.

“Cultural connectivity”

At the end of the semester, I had an idea to gather this huge university. That has not happened before from a student at VIU. I began to make plans where and when I could hold this event, and it was during the final exams. My first plan was to hold it in March, during the Arctic Winter Games in Nuuk, but the timing was not fitting. So I decided that it should be at the end of the semester, before we said farewell to each other.

After about two month of planning and organizing the event – April 7th 2016 I finally held my cultural connectivity night, where Greenland was the host. I opened the night with a Greenlandic song, and right before the eating, an elder said a prayer, where we all held our hands. That was beautiful and we could feel the atmosphere lighten up. The nervousness and a bit of tense energy was gone.

About 30 people showed up, more than I expected because the final exam was tough for all of us, and all the readings and preparations were priority at that time. The two hour long gathering was held at “Gathering Place” Shq’apthut 170 building. We had a lot of fun, and the time just flew by.

“Kaffemik”

Five days after that event, I held another Greenlandic night at the international building. The theme was “Kaffemik”; A Greenlandic tradition for sociability. I baked cakes and made coffee, and that turned out to be great. I used PowerPoint so the students and staff had the opportunity to see Greenland; the culture, traditions, and landscape. They were amazed to see what Greenland really looks like, and they listened to the Greenlandic songs while eating cakes and drinking coffee.

The journey was the best decisions that I have made, and it is because of Ivalo & Minik Fonden.