Exchange report from Canada

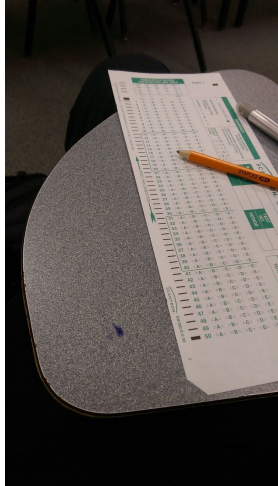George Brown college
4th semester

I chose to study abroad to continue to gain a unique experience by studying abroad second time in a row. A place different from Europe. This was North America. I wanted an environment and culture to be vastly different so that I feel the contrast. My expectation of studying abroad (Canada) was to see with my own eyes the western culture of North America that I grew up with in my childhood through media. As well as see how it was different then what I had imagined. I started my study on 29th of January (there was a delay in study due to a strike happening at their college at the time). However I arrived a week earlier to not miss out on introduction week. A summary of it. They showed the schools and gave very general information.

Applying to study abroad

The application process at KEA was not too difficult. Mostly just getting documents scanned and sent as a pdf on mobility online (website used to apply for an abroad school). Any questions regarding the application process were addressed when asked the international coordinator via email. SIDE NOTE if you have an exam during the time your supposed to be abroad. You can apply for a skype exam.

Courses at George Brown

At KEA I studied computer science. However at the host institution (George Brown) I studied Computer Analytics (same thing different name). Most of the courses there that I got to study were more technical. That is the courses there, thought on learning a new language (python, C#, javascript…). As a contrast to KEA where we got a chance to study SWD or ITO. The method of teaching there is different as well. You will get a 2 hour lecture and a 2 hour lab work (this is physically being in a classroom and doing exercises on their computers). By the end of the semester I learned new languages, gained more experience working in teams and advanced more with previous langues. For me the more usulf parts were attending the lectures and doing my best on their mid and final exams (these are like super tests that give out the biggest amount of grade).
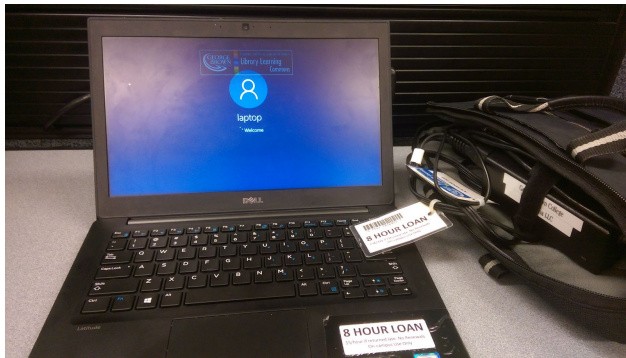
Classes that I took during my 4th semester at George Brown were as follows:

Data structures & algorithms	Using Java you will learn more indepthly data structures. That is you will make your own linked list with modifications (like add elements backwards or something) and look up advanced algorithms in depth like binary three (very recommended due to a very good teacher and seemed like a very useful advanced topic to learn).
Linux fundamentals	A introduction to Linux from a complete zero. Most of the things you will do there is working with bash commands and learning how linux OS operates. (Also recommended however keep in mind that the course itself is weirdly put together at times. Meaning that there were a bit too advanced topics for beginners).
C#	Also a introduction to C# from ground zero. (Not really recommended if you have a great understanding in Java (or any OOP language). However if you chose a lot of hard courses and want something easy or want to have a nice refresher of the 1st semester then why not).
ASP .NET	Introduction from zero. You will learn to create websites and some advice on how to do it more professionally. (Recommended).
Python	Introduction to python from zero as well. If you know about OOP then this will also not be that difficult. However python does have some unique stuff that it makes it worth choosing it as a course. (Recommended).

As far as I remember you should receive a list of available courses and on the George Brown website you can get a more in depth description of them. If your not happy about a course you took. During the first week you can change up your courses by contacting the administration (that's what I did). The administration was very helpful about that process. During the first week

(or before that) I urge you learn what their internal systems are and how to use them. Some examples are: atklass (this where your attendance will be tracked), blackboard (this were you can see all the material from the lecure like slides and exercises and more), george brown email (just like our kea mail). In the library you can rent out a laptop for 8 hours. Book a study room. DO NOT credit your printing balance online (as it does not work). Do it at the library (have some coins ready) if you plan to print some stuff. For the courses I took. I kinda did not need my laptop since during the labs you will be provided with a full desktop pc. However if you do decide to bring one DO NOT forget to bring a North American power outlet adapter.

The Canada culture shock

During the first few weeks I was very excited hearing people talk in the North American accent. From random strangers that I talked too I got an impression that a lot of them were kind (even though some of them were rude, I was still charmed by their behaviour). After the longer stay I noticed that the city of Toronto is very diverse. This could also be clearly seen at George Brown. The culture is about what I expected (things that I saw over the media), but more. Huge sidewalks, enormous cars, tall buildings, etc. Lots of the enjoyment came from small things I did not have a chance to experience back home. Witch is the metro, all english libraries, etc. The college gave very basic information like sights to see, some canadian specific things, some general advice. Later on in the semester we did meet ups (with all other exchange students) each month to catch up on things we did or experience. Later the college got us tickets to

experience a hockey game live. I could not tell you what was the most exciting part since I really did enjoy doing all of them from going to college to exploring the city on foot.

Things to do

Most activities in the city are the same as anywhere else I guess. Visiting bars, clubs or parks. However there are places of interest that you can visit. Such as the CN tower, Ripley's aquarium, zoo and some other stuffs. The public transport makes it a breeze to visit each point of interest. And buying the "Citypass" makes it even cheaper. Most of my aquatencies I made during my stay were through the college and with other exchange students. On some occasion random people would be interested striking up a conversation while I was sightseeing.

The preparations and journey getting there

Like most I talked to we traveled to Toronto by plane. Booked my flight a month in advance (to make the tickets cheaper). Keep in mind that as an EU citizen you don't need a visa to study in Canada. It's enough to get an eTa (electronic travel authorization. Which is a number that gets attached to your passport for 5 years with the low cost of 7 dollars. It will allow you to stay in Canada for 6 months. Although keep in mind you won't be able to visit the USA with just it.) Scheduled my 3rd semester exams to be completed before the flight. Before even setting a foot in North America. Through Facebook groups I have contacted with people if they would be willing to rent me a place out. And someone did respond. They were nice enough to pick me up from the airport (via a bus and a metro). However my second option would have been to go with the "Homestay" program. Where I would be living with a Canadian family for the duration of my stay. The third option would have been AirBnb. Most of my meals were home made and the ingredients I gathered were from sales at the grocery stores. Finally my expenses amounted to roughly 900 canadian dollars a month. Which is what I anticipated more or less. Keep in mind I did try to stay on a very strict budget so your expenses should be different.

All in all. The exchange program to Canada to me was an astounding success and joy. I got to experience the culture I grew with and learn new thing among the way. However if I had to choose between which education technique is better. I would go with the Danish one.