Looking in from the Outside

Lynn Ng Yu Ling

Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives,
University of Victoria

Queen Elizabeth Crossing Borders (Incoming Scholars) Program

Singapore-Canada
Looking in from the Outside explores the experiences of being ‘outside’ Canada. Marginalization does not have to be physically violent or blatantly aggressive. In everyday reality it often takes place in ‘harmless’ ways of ‘micro-aggression’ which reveal ignorance of the host society, such as ‘Asian stereotypes’. Of course, the lack of exposure and understanding to one another’s ways of being goes multiple ways. Compiling the contributions of nine international students and three indigenous students, all of whom are close acquaintances, I hope that people can work towards being more accommodating and sensitive in their encounters with others. This project is a humble attempt at recognising an ethic of relationality and thereafter care, which is easier said than done.
Territory Acknowledgement

I acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen-speaking and SENĆOŦEN-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands, specifically the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose relationships with the land continue to this day.
How being in another country changes you

As an international student previously in England and now Canada, I am particularly interested in exploring the mental journeys of international students who are considered as ‘outside’ Canada. But in the middle, fee hikes for international students were approved. The institution justified this move in a way that puts indigenous and international students against each other. Out of concern for this harmful politics, I decided to include voices from both groups, because there is a lot that they can mutually relate to. Adjusting and coping with sociocultural contexts and expectations that one is not naturally inclined to is a mutual predicament of those who are considered as ‘not belonging’ in their host society. After speaking with colleagues and friends, I have compiled some of their experiences of being ‘outside’ Canada.

To respect the privacy of my respondents, none of their names will be identified. How the material is presented is according to their preferences.
FOOD NOT FEES

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PEOPLE OVER PROFIT
YOU ARE SO LOVED
WE WELCOME:
ALL races and ethnicities
“It is within our differences that we are both most powerful and most vulnerable, and some of the most difficult tasks of our lives are the claiming of differences and learning to use those differences as bridges rather than as barriers between us”.

-Audre Lorde, I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings.
Respondent 1

From Bhutan
Lived in India and Australia, now Canada

• More critical of one’s own thoughts and opinions

• Changed perceptions: one’s shortcomings can be seen as strengths

• Attachment to home has only gotten stronger over time
JUST BECAUSE MY PATH IS DIFFERENT DOESN'T MEAN I'M LOST.
Respondent 2

From Israel

• Cultural differences: like to apologise, careful about offending, very respectful, enjoy personal space, dislike overly close physical contact

• Admire some social norms, but still struggling with the long distance from home

• Easy, quiet, slow pace of life is a welcome change
Respondent 3

- Changes in identity: visitor to student
- Changes in self-perception: Native > minority
- Struggle with coping with new norms and expectations
- Language differences is one of the largest obstacles
- Not direct confrontation but soft and subtle social pressure
- Compared to home country, Canada does not seem as strict with social expectations about general manners and behavior
Respondent 4
From Cambodia
Lived in Japan, now Canada

• Struggle with opposite social norms

• Eg. making appropriate eye contact and addressing professors

• Concerns over the appropriate level of formality
Respondent 5

• Very liberal social atmosphere; generally individualistic culture
  • Different moral and ethical priorities
• Eg. expectations of ‘rewards’ in career advancement, concept of time and lateness
• Many cultures do not share the norms of materialistic benefits from being on the job
  • Emotion, especially love, is where human beings are all the same
    • “We’re the same in different ways”
  • Internet and digital communication is extremely important
• A mixture of adjusting/changing and conforming to social norms
  • Internal balancing act
Equal beneath the surface
Being in Canada as an international student

- Expensive rent in Victoria
- Everything is huge
- Far away from everything
- Cars (huge, noisy, big engines)
- Stress-related concerns
- Adjustment issues 24 hours from home
- Challenge cultural stereotypes
- Having new fantastic friends
- Challenging assumptions
- Nice weather in Victoria
- International environment
What about everyone else? That shirt is displaying "REVERSE RACISM."
Being in Canada

- Managing finances
- Expensive international food
- Difficulties in culturally integrating
- Keeping in touch with friends and family back home through time zone differences
- Managing stress and workload
- Unfamiliar to new learning practices
- Interacting with culturally diverse people
- Fighting ethnic stereotypes
- Making great new friends
WE JUDGE
BECAUSE
WE DON'T
UNDERSTAND
Being in Canada as an international student

- Family
- Missing Home
- Insecurity
- Uncertainty
- Curriculum differences
- Cultural exchange
- Nationality
- Culture
- Stereotypes
- Racism
- Ethnicity
- Social
- Marginalization
- Institutional
- New Friends 😊
- Wonderful colleagues
- International Food
- Cost of Living $
Being in Canada as an international student

- Great environment
- Nice folks
- Easy for driving
- Beautiful scenery
- Relaxing atmosphere
- Language barrier
- Financial problem
- Problems I met: C
- Visa/study permit
- Accommodation and Rent
- Climate and weather
- Public transportation
- Food
WHY IS COLOR SEPARATING US?
being an Indigenous Student in Canada

- emotionally
- mentally
- physically
- spiritually
- taxing
- challenging
- over committed (family, community, school, profession)
- balancing act
- rewarding
- emotional
- emotionally taxing
- isolating
- exhausting
- good friends/relationships and connections
Love one another, shall we?
Let’s face it. We’re undone by each other. And if we’re not, we’re missing something.

For if I am confounded by you, then you are already of me, and I am nowhere without you. I cannot muster the ‘we’ except by finding the way in which I am tied to ‘you,’ by trying to translate but finding that my own language must break up and yield if I am to know you. You are what I gain through this disorientation and loss. This is how the human comes into being, again and again, as that which we have yet to know.