

## **Final report**

*Geography (B.Sc.), Canada, 01. Sep. 2018 – 24. Apr. 2019, Acadia University*

Whoever is interested in going to Canada should definitely be interested in wilderness and nature, ...because you will find a lot of it over there! But beside its beautiful scenery, the culture of Canadian university life is more than interesting as well. It is different to what we know from Germany in many ways and it is very rewarding having the chance to experience it.

I remember there being so many things to make decisions about before finally going on my trip to Wolfville, Canada. Decisions I spend so much time thinking about, trying to figure out what would be best. Now I feel like I can say, however I would have decided, it would have probably been great, just different. I decided to put Acadia University as my first priority. I knew it was going to be a small university, but I thought that exactly that might burry great potential. The scenery of Nova Scotia looked beautiful and the courses offered by the science department sounded interesting. I am sure no matter to what University in Canada you end up going to you will have a great experience. The university system is well developed and I think none of the Universities that are part of the program would be disappointing in terms of quality.

I do also remember spending quite some time on my application. I think it is helpful to start getting prepared well in advance. As always, getting all the papers needed together usually takes longer than you first thought and it is definitely nice not getting stressed in the end.

As a German citizen, you do not need a visa for Canada but an electronic Travel Authorization (eTA). It costs 7\$ and can easily be applied for online. You will also need to apply for a study permit online which costs you 150\$. I recommend booking your flight early, if you want to get a good deal. During summer time Condor flights are direct from Frankfurt to Halifax, which is nice. If you arrive late at the airport in Halifax, the limousine shuttle is probably the best way to get to Wolfville. The Maritimes bus only runs during the day.

I decided not to take the Acadia health insurance, but to get a German one from HanseMercur, which was cheaper. If you do not want to take the Acadian one, you

will need to opt out online. Going to the doctor in Nova Scotia is super expensive, so make sure your insurance covers enough! As a foreign patient, you pay around 900\$ for visiting a doctor.

I decided to live on campus. This is probably the easiest way to find a place to stay and it is also quite an experience. I would recommend a single room, if you would like to have some time for yourself ever once in a while. Double rooms are pretty small. I stayed in Cutten House in a single room in the quiet section (it can get loud on the weekends in the other areas). If you do live on campus you will need to take a meal plan (it is mandatory). The food is good I would say, but you will not be cooking for yourself for a while...

Life in Canada is not cheap. Residence and meal hall are one thing, but going out or buying certain things is the other. Especially the books for university, cosmetic products and drinks at the bar are more expensive than in Germany. Regarding the books: Many teachers will tell you that you need to get them. But just wait a couple weeks and see if you actually do. You will usually be fine with only using the lectures for the exam.

The language will come easy! Terms used in class during the first couple month will most likely confuse you a lot, but without even noticing the transition everything will make sense at some point. The Canadian English can be understood really well.

They do talk very clearly.

Public transportation in Nova Scotia is not comparable to Freiburg at all. Becoming friends with people who have a car might be the best way to get around (hahaha).

There is a bus running to New Minas (next bigger place with bigger stores), and one to Halifax.

You will realize very soon that Canadian people are extremely friendly. They are very respectful and open minded, but be careful when it comes to having a drink in public.

They are super (!) strict about that.

What I loved the most about Acadia was the kind of relationship which was established between students and professors throughout the term. Acadia is small and therefore allowing perfect working conditions in class. As far as I can tell from my own experience the professors always try to help you as much as possible, because they do want you to archive your goals. Do not be afraid to ask, they are very willing and helpful wherever they can. University is very personal and you will realize that

everybody tries to motivate you all the time. Competition, as well as pressure (like you may know from the German system) are not as big of a deal.

The time spend on lectures, labs, papers and studying is a lot more than what I was used to from Freiburg. Quizzes and tests will take place several times throughout the term. Since you literally have to do some work all the time throughout the whole term, the material that needs to be learned seems a lot easier (you do not tend to study everything at once). Tests seem therefore easier. Personally, I did like the Canadian system a lot. Since the studying was very continuous, the long-term result was better.

The study conditions at Acadia University are very good. Acadia is a small university of about 3500 students. As I said, the relationship between professors and students is personal and relaxed. Many classes (especially the upper year ones) tend to be small. Lectures at Acadia can be compared to what we know as seminars from Freiburg. They are often interactive. Most courses that I took were geology ones. The science department is very well equipped, regarding tools and samples in the lab. We did a lot of geology field trips which were great. You get around a bit this way and they are super interesting!

The department usually informs you about all kind of events that might be interesting for you. I did attend one of the geoscience conferences in New Brunswick. It is a great opportunity to hear about other students or professors research and it will be a great chance to connect with other students too.

At the end of my second semester at Acadia I had the opportunity to attend a Student Industry Field Trip (SIFT) in Calgary, Alberta, to which I had applied. This was a two-week trip, sponsored by the Canadian Society of Petroleum Geology (CSPG).

Lectures from industry professionals, workshops, an exploration game, as well as a four-day trip to the Rocky Mountains and a day at the Dinosaur Heritage Site were included during these days. I highly encourage you to take every chance/opportunity you are offered. These kinds of experiences can be so valuable and are a lot of fun. Keep your eyes open, there are notices on the black board all the time. Simply apply for the things you would like to do, the worst thing that can happen is that you will not get in.

If you are interested in getting to know Canadian students, I recommend you to be open right from the beginning. Do not be shy, because you think your English might not be the best. Canadians are super friendly and will not judge you on that at all. But

from my own experience it helps if you to do the first step yourself and just start talking to people. Do not wait until the first couple weeks are over. The tons of questions you have in the beginning are usually a great opportunity to start talk to other people in class.

Since my major is geography but most courses I took were geology ones, there was a lot that was totally new to me. Especially regarding terminology. Everything might seem a lot in the beginning, but will become familiar and easy to understand soon. The level of difficulty of the course material in combination with the foreign language was just perfect for me I would say.

During your stay aboard you will not only learn about your field of study but also a lot about yourself. You will improve your ability to adapt to new situation, organize yourself even better, get a different perspective on all kind of things, as well as realize again what really matters to you in life and eventually what your goals for the future are. Getting some distance to your familiar environment back home is always a good thing. And you will definitely improve your language skills, which is certainly a big advantage nowadays.

My time at Acadia has helped me to look at many things from a second perspective. It has given me new ideas on what I want to do with my studies in the future and on what kind of opportunities there are out there, of which I have never thought before.

Overall, I can say that my time at Acadia turned out to be an even better experience than I had expected and I am glad I took this adventure. Looking back, there were so many things I worried about, because I did not know how things were going to turn out. It turned out, things were a lot easier than expected and my time there so much more fulfilling than I would have thought. The studying part itself was actually a lot of fun, I met awesome people who became close friends over the year and who were one big reason why I enjoyed everything so much in Wolfville.

The three greatest “take-away-values” which I will definitely try to remember back home are:

- 1.) Be a lot more relaxed about everything, just like Canadians are.
- 2.) Think positive. Do not always see the negative aspects of whatever (like we like to do it in Germany).
- 3.) Be friendly to everybody. You will feel great at the end of the day.

All the great moments I had and the memories I made during my year in Nova Scotia mean a lot to me and I can only recommend everyone who ever thought about doing an exchange: DO IT!



**Sunset Wolfville**



**Kejimikujik Seaside National Park**



**Peggy's Cove**



**Road Trip**



**Nova Scotia East Coast**



**Cape Breton**



**Student Industry Field Trip - Dinosaur Heritage Site, Alberta**



**Student Industry Field Trip - Rocky Mountains**



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