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Spring 2014

A SEMESTER IN CANADA WITH THE NATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE FURTHERS INTEREST IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND LEADS TO AN INTERNATIONAL CAREER

Contributed by John Lennon '11

Spanish and International Affairs, Asian Studies minor

The National Student Exchange (NSE) helped to pique my interest in foreign affairs. This may seem like an interesting statement due to the fact that the NSE works with universities across the USA and Canada only, but it was my first step leaving home in order to see the world through different perspectives. With the help of the NSE at UNH I was able to study abroad in Saskatchewan, Canada. Before this experience I had never traveled very much, and with the exceptions of a few family trips I hadn't spent much time out of New England.



John Lennon (in back row, wearing hat & scarf) with University of Regina students on trip to Banff

I attended the University of Regina, located in the capital city of Saskatchewan, because it offered upper-level language classes in Chinese and Japanese, which UNH didn't offer at the time. I went to the international orientations and conventions when I first got there. It's actually because of this situation that my core group of friends in Canada came from all over the world; my friends were from Mexico, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and Canada. We hung out all the time, but some of my most memorable experiences were when we shared our cultures. We always had dinner nights and cooked food from our home countries to share with one another (I miss the enchiladas, sushi, and kimbap my friends cooked for me); we had movie nights too (it is because of my Japanese friend that I now love Studio Ghibli), and I learned and practiced their languages also, since I was studying Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese at the University of Regina.



John at Torii gate at The Toukoyasaka Shrine

This first experience really made me hungry for more. After my time in Canada, I also studied abroad in the UK, Spain, and Japan. My first job out of university was a teaching position in South Korea, and now I am a teacher in Japan with the JET Program. I'm still trying to sate my hunger for traveling, but there are myriad places to be, and so much to learn by putting oneself in foreign cultures. I'm thankful for the opportunities I had to learn about foreign languages and cultures through the NSE. Being an international student in Canada, I was able to go to a foreign country that wasn't too far from home, which helped me since I was a little worried about leaving everything behind that I knew in New Hampshire. But, it put me in the same grouping as the other foreign students and we sort of banded together in our exploration of Canada while learning so much about the world through each other.



John with his 9th grade class at Ujo Junior High School in Japan

JET Program

So now I am working in Akita Prefecture, Japan as a teacher with the JET Program. Akita is located in the northern part of the main island, and is known for being rural. There are a lot of farms where I live, and people are still surprised when they see me, since foreigners are rare here. But, I'm in the midst of it all as part of the cog keeping the machine going. I have two junior high schools, three elementary schools, one after-school program for elementary students, and I occasionally go to a few other schools to help out the other English teachers in my area. I work with the board of education, principals, and teachers at the schools in order to teach, lesson plan, run English club, assist in after school sports, and create community activities. I am speaking a lot of Japanese, since not all the teachers can speak English, and dealing with different social

cues that are appropriate for the Japanese work environment. I also consider my role to be a cultural ambassador for NH and the U.S., and somewhere amidst all this, I strive to make English class enjoyable so that my students are engaged and understand that there is a big world out there to explore.

To learn more about The National Student Exchange, contact [Paula DiNardo](#).

