

EXCHANGE STUDENT

The University of Prince Edward Island is a warm, friendly community which is quite cosmopolitan, encompassing students from all over the world. I myself am an Exchange Student from Dundee University in Scotland. My university is considerably larger, with approximately 4,000 undergraduate students. It organises a formal exchange program with various universities in the United States and Canada, of which UPEI is one.

The opportunity to participate in an exchange scheme is an extremely challenging yet stimulating experience, as one is required to be flexible in order to cope with a different environment, culture and simply, just with a new way of life. It is obvious that living away from home for a year in a foreign country is a great undertaking and certainly makes you quite apprehensive as you simply do not know exactly what to expect. Certain doubts and worries flood into your mind; will I settle in? What will the people be like? and other such concerns. However, I have been here for just over two weeks and most of my worries have subsided. For one, I have found that the Islanders I have met have been so sincere, generous and basically willing to help you in any difficulties, which is quite refreshing. I have also found that the people here tend to adopt you as one of them, which helps diminish your complex about 'fitting in'. I have found that people here have a genuine interest in you as you are foreign and different. So many people have wandered up to me, asking me about Britain or where I'm from because they love the English accent.

The only problem, if I could even call it that, would be the size of everything here. PEI to me was somewhat of a culture shock, initially, as I have always lived in a large town relatively close to Liverpool. However, over the past two weeks, the community spirit and the unspoilt beauty of the island have overwhelmed me and I feel quite settled here, even though sometimes I still cannot believe it or make it in that I'm actually here, as I've never lived in such a charming countrified environment.

There are not only the changes with my environment, but with classes, friends and even the smallest things such as the important topic of food. The classes I

find are far more friendly and personal as they are smaller in size. I wandered into my first lecture and half-expected a history class of perhaps one hundred students at the very least and to my pleasant surprise there were about thirty students and in addition, the professors seemed vaguely human! The food must also come under the closest scrutiny and perhaps it will cause an uproar, but in my personal opinion, I feel that the food is very good, and although my fellow Canadian compatriots are repelled by the very idea of eating it, I think they should feel privileged, as it could be a great deal worse!

An exchange scheme which enables a student to travel to a foreign country relatively cheaply is a highly profitable experience, considering the opportunities awaiting you. The possibilities are endless for travelling and I already have ambitious plans for the summer. If you are interested in such an exchange with a university abroad and you are fortunate enough to be chosen, then you ought to seize the opportunity as it is one very worthwhile, exciting experience.

Leslie O'Flanagan

