



# DALconnects Reflective Assignment 2013/2014

## **Introduction**

During the summer of 2012 I moved from Kemptville, Ontario to Halifax. At the end of my first year at Dalhousie University I felt like I had not spent enough time being involved with my school and my community. When I came back to school in the fall for my second year at Dal, I decided to become more involved by doing something I have always loved to do: volunteering. When I was searching for volunteer opportunities on the Dal website I came across the DALconnects Certificate Program and I knew it was the perfect way to become more involved at school and also outside of school. DALconnects is a great way to gain new skills as a student if you don't have a lot of job experience. It is also an opportunity to learn something that isn't part of your program. For example, I am taking Earth Science but I chose to work in an environment with children and youth. This program is was a great was to meet new people who shared similar views on university life and community life as me.

## **Boys and Girls Club of Spryfield**

Eric set me up at the Boys and Girls Club of Spryfield when I told him I was interested in volunteering with children. He couldn't have set me up in a more perfect place. During first semester I went to the club on Monday's after school. As a volunteer it is my job to entertain the kids by playing with them and being there for them as a friend. I help with providing social, educational and recreational programs for the kids. I go to the Boys and Girls Club once a week and also attend additional events such as parades and bowling fundraisers on weekends. I feel like I have learned more from the kids than they have learned from me sometimes. Spending a

few hours colouring, playing outside or playing games can instantly turn around a child's bad day. I try to get to the club early because it makes me happy to be there when the kids show up after school and they yell my name and run to me to give me hugs.



## **Dalhousie Tours for Prospective Students**

Giving tours at Dal for students that were thinking about coming to dal really hit home for me because my brother is graduating this year and thinking about what schools to go to. When I was doing my tours I tried to imagine that the students I had were all just like my brother, unsure of what university will hold for them. I talked to them about all of my experiences so far in my first and second year at Dal and I tried to give them lots of tips about living in Halifax, how to do well in class, and how to make the most of their time in University. I also tried to imagine that I was talking to myself two years ago when I also wasn't sure what university would be like. Overall this volunteer experience was great for sharing the knowledge I've gained from being a Dalhousie student.



## **Workshops**

I found the workshops very informative. My favourite workshop was cross culture communication. I grew up in a small town that lacked cultural and racial diversity. When I came to dal I was overwhelmed by the cultural diversity of the school and city of Halifax. I love learning about people's cultures and I found that in this workshop I learned that different cultures may have different traditions or ways they do things that are different from what I might be used to. It really opened my eyes to how important good communication is. My suggestions for next year is that there is a fall retreat and more motivational workshops and that they be offered at a different variety

of times (for example some in the morning, afternoon and evening), although I understand that this depends on the availability of the person presenting the workshop. I also think that it might be beneficial for participants to write a short paragraph before starting the program about what they want to gain from DALconnects to give the coordinators workshop ideas.

## **Winter Survival Retreat**

This was absolutely amazing. I have done a lot of programs and camps for winter survival and I still learned a lot of great tips from this retreat. I thought this was a great way to meet a lot of people in the program. We were given the chance to spend the entire day with each other instead of just an hour or two during a workshop. This day was also really hands on which made it more interesting after a week of lectures at school. My favourite part was the shelter building. We talked a lot about the ideas we all had for how to build our shelter. Although we all had a different

picture of what we wanted to build, we were able to collaborate and compromise to create a truly sustainable shelter in my opinion.

### **Canadian Conference on Student Leadership**

The CCSL has honestly changed my life. Before we left for this weekend conference I felt as though I shouldn't be in school anymore and that I was wasting my time. I decided that this weekend would be a getaway from school and I would give it

100%. The entire atmosphere of the conference just brought out the leader inside of me. Being in a room with a couple hundred extremely passionate and motivating leaders made me realize how much potential I have as a student. I loved that the sessions were all student run, it made me realize that this could be me. These were not just adults teaching me about things but these are driven student leaders that are full of knowledge, experiences and intelligence. After the conference was over I felt motivated to be



happy no matter what life threw my way. I could write pages and pages about all the skills and knowledge I gained from the conference. Luckily, I have a few pages of notes to remind me. I want to be able to do more on campus in my last two years as a Dalhousie student. I want to use the knowledge I have gained to possibly conduct future DALconnects programs and start something new on campus. I think our school lacks recourses for students who want to learn more about self-defense and information about what sexual assault is. I would like to implement some sort of free self-defense class and sexual assault information sessions for any dal student who wants to participate. Hopefully in the next two years I can try to make something like this happen. CCSL has helped me realize that I have an amazing life full of potential! Its hard to explain in words how much this weekend meant to me because really it was only a four day conference but I have never felt so motivated in my entire life than I do now after having attended the CCSL. Oh, and I got to meet Jay Onrait and Dan O'Toole. Hopefully I will be able to attend the next CCSL; maybe even as a presenter!



## **Conclusion**

I think that during the 2013/2014 school year I have learned so much about myself, life and what education actually means. Just because you get good grades doesn't mean that you are educated in my opinion. Education goes way beyond the classroom and that is what the DALconnects program has done for me. It has opened me up to the endless amount of possibilities I have to offer to the University and the community. I have learned how to be truly happy and that is by enjoying the present and doing things for other people. I am most happy when I am volunteering and doing something to make someone else happy. The volunteering aspect of the DALconnects program has allowed me to become a stronger leader and more outgoing. I hope to use the knowledge I have gained from DALconnects to help the program grow in the next couple of years. Thank you so much for the opportunity to have been a part of the DALconnects Certificate Program.

