

**University of Victoria  
co-op students advance  
UN SDGs through the  
Co-operative Education  
Program**

## Acknowledgements

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- Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INPTA) in Belgium
- Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA) in Lithuania
- Federal University of Minas Gerais in Brazil
- FH JOANNEUM in Austria
- Friedrich-Schiller Universität Jena in Germany
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## Foreword by Nikhil Seth

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) remains dedicated to advancing global learning and capacity-building, addressing the critical needs of our time through innovative and impactful programs. The collaboration between UNITAR and the International Training Centres for Authorities and Leaders (CIFAL) Global Network continues to play a pivotal role in these efforts, offering a dynamic platform for knowledge exchange and capacity development across diverse sectors.

CIFAL Victoria, established at the University of Victoria (UVic), has emerged as a beacon of this global effort on the West Coast of North America. Through its initiatives, CIFAL Victoria not only connects the region with global best practices but also fosters meaningful partnerships that drive forward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The centre has become a hub where local knowledge meets global challenges, equipping youth and professionals alike with the tools they need to lead in an increasingly complex world.

This publication captures the spirit of youth engagement and their active contributions towards a sustainable future. It highlights the powerful role that young people at UVic and beyond are playing in advancing the SDGs, demonstrating their commitment to tackling issues such as climate change, social justice, and global equity.

As we reflect on the stories and experiences shared in this publication, it is clear that the younger generation is not merely the inheritor of the future but is actively shaping it. Through their participation in cooperative education programs, international placements, and community-based initiatives, these students embody the principles of the SDGs and offer fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to the world's most pressing challenges.

The importance of youth leadership in this journey cannot be overstated. Their voices, actions, and creativity are essential in steering our global community toward a more sustainable and equitable future. We are proud to support these efforts and are inspired by the impact that these young leaders are already making.

I invite you to explore this publication with a sense of optimism and hope, knowing that the future is being crafted by capable and dedicated hands. The stories within serve as a testament to the potential of youth to lead transformative change and underscore the importance of continued investment in education and international cooperation.

Let this be a call to action for all of us to support and amplify the voices of the next generation as they champion the SDGs and work tirelessly to create a world where no one is left behind.

### **Nikhil Seth**

United Nations Assistant Secretary General &  
Executive Director at the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)



## CIFAL Co-op Education Program Forward

The University of Victoria (UVic) and surrounding communities care deeply about the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their calls to action to create an equitable planet and a sustainable and inclusive economy. This sentiment is a shared source of pride for our campus, that this is our focus and that the SDGs align so closely with UVic's core values and match our training and research strengths. And there is always room to grow.

We want to dream big when it comes to making poverty disappear or inhabiting an environment that is clean and protected. We want decolonization and self-determination, we want clean oceans... and so much more. Some of the biggest dreamers, those who see a brighter future and are ready to put training or research into action, are our students.

The collaboration between CIFAL Victoria and UVic's co-op program is a perfect demonstration of how our values of partnering for a shared future and stewardship for this planet are made stronger together. The world's biggest challenges can only be solved using a multidisciplinary and connected approach – they require a diversity of thought, a lined-up and complementary effort.

We will not just be the people who will bring forward creative, informed, and practical solutions for a sustained and equitable future, we will train future leaders to do the same. The lived experience from this training will help our future thought leaders to drive the SDG's forward using the best available knowledge.

Together we can use the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a roadmap to how we want the world to look, and how we need the to be planet shared. That's why the UN flag flies on our campus, as a reminder that together we are greater than the sum of our parts and through collaboration and innovation we will make a difference.

### **Kevin Hall**

President and Vice-Chancellor  
University of Victoria (UVic)



## Foreword by Andrea Giles

At the University of Victoria, hands-on learning is a transformative part of the student experience and a vital way that the university contributes to an emerging work force. We are home to one of the largest co-operative education programs in Canada—where students alternate terms working for employers in their field of study with terms in class. Students complete over 4,100 co-op placements every year.

More than 72% of eligible UVic students take part in co-op and gain paid work experience with more than 1,300 employers worldwide. Of these students, 62% receive job offers before they graduate.

For the past five years, UVic has been named the best Canadian comprehensive university for graduate employability by the Times Higher Education Global University Employability Ranking Report. We support students' priorities related to their career journeys, including a deep focus on access, inclusion, equity, diversity, and decolonization.

We are proud of the tremendous impact that students make on their work terms—UVic co-op students have always been changemakers and co-op supports them to make positive change to the world around them.

### **Andrea Giles**

Executive Director

Co-operative Education Program and Career Services (UVic)



## Introduction – Crystal Tremblay

As the Director of CIFAL Victoria, I am thrilled to partner on this initiative highlighting the vital contributions of UVic’s co-op students in advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) through international cooperative education programs. The intersection of education and global citizenship has never been more crucial, as we face pressing challenges such as social inequality, environmental degradation, and public health crises that affect communities worldwide. The transformative power of cooperative education enables students to apply their academic knowledge in real-world settings while gaining valuable insights into the complexities of sustainable development on a global scale. Through placements in diverse international contexts, UVic co-op students engage meaningfully with local communities, organizations, and initiatives that align with the UN SDGs. This experiential learning approach not only equips students with essential skills but also fosters a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of global issues and the importance of collaborative solutions that are place-based.

This report showcases the experiences of UVic co-op students who have embraced their roles as global citizens in their host communities. By participating in initiatives focused on areas such as multilateral diplomacy, food security, quality education, and sustainable cities, these students exemplify the potential of youth to realize sustainable futures. They contribute fresh perspectives and innovative ideas, thereby enriching their host organizations and creating a positive impact that resonates far beyond their time abroad.

We also acknowledge the importance of partnerships - between educational institutions, local organizations, and global networks - in fostering a shared commitment to advancing the UN SDGs. It is our hope that this report will not only illuminate the achievements of UVic co-op students but also inspire further collaboration and action toward a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

### **Crystal Tremblay**

Director of CIFAL Victoria & Faculty member  
Department of Geography (UVic)



## Introduction – Karima Ramji

As the associate director of UVic’s International, Indigenous and Accessibility team, Co-operative Education Program and Career Services, I see first-hand how international work experiences make a difference to all—the co-op students, their employers, and the communities they serve. Close to 150 students take part in co-op work terms outside of Canada each year.

Many co-op students who travel abroad to complete their co-op work terms are supported by various funding programs, including those offered through the Government of Canada as part of Canada’s international education strategy. Most recently, the Global Skills Opportunity (GSO) Program has provided students facing barriers to international education with the opportunity to engage in mobility programs through financial support and facilitating wraparound supports.

This year, UVic’s co-op program launched a new initiative that helps students funded by GSO to directly link their work to the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

This program, developed in partnership with [CIFAL Victoria](#), a training centre connected to the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), provides students who do co-op terms outside Canada with the opportunity to earn UN accreditation for engaging in co-op work terms that advance the UN SDGs. They must also facilitate a community-based activity that enhances SDGs in their host country. During the program, students reflect on and apply the four cultural intelligence (CQ) dimensions: CQ Drive (motivation and confidence in intercultural interactions), CQ Knowledge (understanding of how cultures are similar or different), CQ Strategy (awareness and ability to plan for intercultural interactions), and CQ Action (ability to adapt when relating and working in intercultural contexts). These 4 dimensions are drawn from the [Cultural Intelligence Center’s](#) CQ framework, which is used by UVic Co-op and Career.

This publication shares inspiring stories of community engagement activities from students who were awarded CIFAL certifications for their co-op education experiences in various countries around the world.

My special gratitude to the Government of Canada for providing the Global Skills Opportunity scholarships that funded these students’ experiences, the University of Victoria’s European Studies Program for partnering with us on some of these placements, and to all the employers who provided valuable co-op opportunities to our students, enabling them to make a meaningful impact to their communities.

### **Karima Ramji**

Associate Director International, Indigenous and Accessibility  
Co-operative Education Program and Career Services (UVic)

# Summer 2023

## Stories

The following student stories showcase the extraordinary learning and impact that UVic students have made through their work experiences. Many students also shared their experiences on [UVic's StoryMap, which you can see here.](#)



Commerce

## Lauren McDiarmid: Addressing food insecurity

During her work term at Apex K.K in Tokyo, Lauren led an impactful movement that not only addressed the critical issue of zero hunger worldwide (UN SDG #2) but also promoted good health and well-being (UN SDG #3) and sought to reduce inequalities (UN SDG #10).

### A meaningful contribution to her host community

Lauren chose to organize a food drive in support of Second Harvest, a local food bank in Tokyo, where she successfully raised 56,000¥ JPY and collected six boxes of food items donated by the team at Apex K.K.

Executed over a week, the project made meaningful contributions by shedding light on local food scarcity issues and helping families and individuals in need. The initiative not only provided tangible support but also ignited conversations around food insecurity.

### Developing cultural intelligence

*“This journey strengthened my cultural intelligence as I navigated the complexities of communicating and executing the food drive within a different cultural context.”*

While announcing her project, Lauren crafted the message to align with both the food bank’s norms and the cultural expectations of her colleagues.

She recognized that food preferences and cultural norms vary across regions, so it was crucial to tailor the donations to suit the localization pressures of the Tokyo community. For example, understanding that raw seafood and seaweed are staples in Japanese cuisine helped ensure that the donations aligned with the local preferences.

### A focus on leadership

The entire project, from conceptualization to execution, allowed Lauren to leverage her existing leadership skills and cultivate new ones. She unveiled the event during Apex K.K’s company meeting that had around 80 attendees.

Public speaking was a significant component of this role, as Lauren needed to effectively communicate the purpose, goals, and importance of the food drive. This experience enhanced her ability to convey ideas confidently and persuasively.

*“This journey was a doorway to building connections and networking with individuals that I otherwise would have not interacted with in my daily life. This networking aspect enriched my professional and personal connections, enhancing my overall growth and offering a broader perspective on the community’s dynamics in Tokyo.”*



## Jenna Inch: Facilitating conversations around Canada-EU relationships

Jenna spent a co-op term as a junior policy analyst with the Canada EU Trade and Investment Association (CEUTIA) in Brussels, Belgium, where she helped advance the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

### A meaningful contribution to her host community

As part of this experience, Jenna organised an educational mixer for young professionals from various European Union (EU) member states and Canada to learn more about the Canada-EU relationship, while providing a networking opportunity for individuals from diverse backgrounds. The mixer included a trivia game that Jenna created that centered on the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA).

*"Many of the trivia questions prompted laughs, surprised reactions, and side conversations among the participants. Additionally, some attendees came up to me afterwards mentioning their interest in the Canada-EU relationship and how they could get a hold of some of the resources I used to craft the trivia questions."*

### Supporting the UN SDGs

Jenna's community service project directly addressed a range of SDGs, including:

1. Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8)
2. Partnership for the Goals (SDG 17)

The topics covered included Canada-EU economic development, CETA, climate change, the circular economy, and social equity, subtly incorporating SDG 5, 7, 9, 12, and 13 due to the breath of the content covered.

### Developing cultural intelligence

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) played an important role in the educational mixer, influencing her interactions with participants and event presentation.

*"As my participants were both from Canadian and various European descents, I acted in a way that would allow for me to stick to my Canadian roots without potentially alienating or making uncomfortable my European guests."*

Jenna used her CQ Action skills during the event by paying attention to her cadence, her level of physical distance, her levels of eye contact, and other verbal and non-verbal behaviours. The mixer was organised in such a way that conversation periods for chatting and networking among participants were slotted for the beginning of the event, during the trivia round, and after the trivia was complete.

### A focus on leadership

Jenna also had the opportunity to strengthen her leadership skills through the implementation of this event. Even though language barriers did present a hurdle during the set-up for the event, she remained calm and was ultimately able to pull off a successful event. Overall, Jenna's community engagement activity was a well-rounded event, enlightening individuals on the Canada-EU relationship, fostering her leadership skills, using her cultural intelligence, and facilitating the growth of professional and personal networks.



## Commerce

# Hanna Schleppe: Engaging with big thinkers across industries

During her co-op experience in Graz, Austria through UVic's award-winning CANEU-COOP Program, Hanna was involved in two main community engagement activities, including the "15 seconds festival" where she had the opportunity to engage with speakers from organizations like Google, Forbes, and Twitter. She also ran an activity that established a mutual knowledge exchange between local students.

### Supporting the UN SDGs

Both activities addressed multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically targeting UN SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), UN SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), and UN SDG 4 (Quality Education).

The central theme of these events was to encourage the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and cultural experiences, promoting the broader goals outlined in the UN SDGs.

### A meaningful contribution to her host community

As an employee at FH JOANNEUM, Hanna's active engagement in the festival allowed her to bring back innovative ideas, industry insights, and best practices that could be integrated into her work and shared with her colleagues.

### Developing cultural intelligence

*"My cultural intelligence played a pivotal role in allowing me to have an open mind to appreciate the entirety of perspectives and voices represented. Having high CQ helped me avoid misunderstandings caused by language and cultural differences. I took the initiative to adapt my way of speaking to match theirs. I also researched their preferred communication styles and sought advice from local individuals beforehand."*

### A focus on leadership

Interacting with the local students provided Hanna with a unique perspective on leadership, emphasizing its role in fostering a supportive community, not just limited to large scale initiatives.

By engaging with like-minded individuals passionate about business, creativity, and innovation, she expanded her horizons and established potential collaborations, partnerships, and mentorship opportunities.

*"As I explore potential job roles, having such a network could potentially inform me about upcoming job openings, allowing me to build upon my international job experience. My newfound confidence resonates through both my academic and professional pursuits, bolstering my sense of self-assurance and propelling me forward."*



Commerce

## Curtis Lever: Exploring the role of AI in education

Driven by his keen interest in the intersection of technology and business, Curtis helped organize a networking night as part of his work term at the Thai-Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

### Supporting the UN SDGs

His community engagement activity and co-op work term actively addressed a range of SDGs, including:

1. Quality Education (SDG 4)
2. Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8)
3. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9)

### A meaningful contribution to his host community

The networking event featured a panel discussion on AI and its impact on both the business world and personal lives and drew over 70 attendees. Curtis actively engaged in discussions covering the influence of AI on diverse industries such as healthcare, education, marketing, finance and more.

The event also focused on the pivotal role of AI in the future of education and business on both local and global scales.

*"As AI tools are introduced into the classroom, they have the potential to exacerbate education inequalities if only upper-class schools can provide their students with the benefits of incorporating AI into the educational environment. I think it's critical to consider how AI will impact education and to make sure that we are applying AI in a way that is equitable and enhances opportunity for all."*

### Developing cultural intelligence

Curtis attributed his successful networking in this multicultural environment to his cultural intelligence, emphasizing the value of open-minded discussions on the implications of AI technology.

### A focus on leadership

The international setting presented an amazing opportunity to communicate with individuals from diverse industries.

*"Attending this event and other similar ones helped me grow into a better leader because it's giving me practice getting out of my comfort zone and taking the social and professional initiative to start conversations and ask the right questions."*



## Angelina Schwarz: Fostering conversations between Canada and the EU

Angelina's internship at the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INPTA) opened doors for her to explore the intricate world of Canada-EU relations and its profound impact on multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With the guidance of her supervisor, Angelina organized a panel discussion as her community engagement activity with representatives from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Mission of Canada to the European Union.

### Supporting the UN SDGs

Angelina focused on SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG 5 (Gender Inequality), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Her cultural intelligence played a pivotal role in ensuring consideration and respect, when navigating through sensitive international topics.

### A meaningful contribution to her host community

Angelina's objectives for her community engagement activity were to make a meaningful contribution to her host community, learn more about EU-Canada bilateral relations, and network and form new contacts in Belgium.

She was able to learn a great deal about Canada-EU relations on a variety of topics, notably SDG engagement, joint collaboration on the war in Ukraine, and upholding democracy and human rights. The discussions spanned diverse areas, including joint security and defense strategies in conflict zones like Palestine and Kosovo and the shared commitment of the Canada-EU alliance to prioritizing human rights and peace during the war in Ukraine.

### Developing cultural intelligence

*"My cultural intelligence played a pivotal role in ensuring consideration and respect, when navigating through sensitive international topics. Using my CQ strategy, I focused on topics for discussions and questions I could ask that lead back to the SDGs. For example, at the Canadian Mission, I inquired how Canada and the EU are jointly working together on supporting women affected by sexual violence due to the war in Ukraine."*

### A focus on leadership

Angelina took the initiative to reach out to different Brussels professionals for their participation in panel discussions. She also led discussions on key themes, such as the UN SDGs and how Canada-EU relations support gender equality projects.



Biochemistry and Microbiology

## Seoyoon Lee: Promoting mental and physical wellbeing

Seoyoon Lee (biochemistry and microbiology) found the work term of her dreams at Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena in Germany. As a research intern, Seoyoon carved out opportunities to develop her cultural intelligence at every turn.

### A meaningful contribution to her host community

Seoyoon engaged in two major events focused on community engagement: Diversity Days and Community of Action Week, aimed at fostering equality and promoting health and well-being. During Diversity Days, Seoyoon focused on creating awareness regarding diversity and equality within post-secondary institutions.

The second event, Community of Action Week, concentrated on promoting mental and physical health for students and citizens in Jena by hosting informative lectures, discussions and activities such as yoga in the morning and creating renewable energy by cycling.

### Supporting the UN SDGs

Through these activities, Seoyoon addressed several UN Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 10 (Reducing Inequalities), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being).

### Developing cultural intelligence

These activities facilitated valuable networking opportunities where Seoyoon interacted not only with fellow students but also with research professors and lab assistants.

*“It was interesting to hear how everyone’s solution to making Jena a more diverse and inclusive environment differed depending on their cultural background. This helped me realize that all the questions I should ask and the brainstorming I partake in should conform to Germanic Europe’s cultural values more than my own two backgrounds.”*

Overall, Seoyoon’s community engagement activities served as a platform for strengthening her leadership skills, particularly in public speaking, enhancing her cultural intelligence, and building a network that extends beyond borders.

*“These multicultural interactions and problem-solving activities inspired me to continue to question and develop my CQ Drive. I was motivated to learn about what other EC2U institutions were doing to promote diversity on their campuses and how each university differed from each other to best accommodate their cultural traditions and values.”*

### A focus on leadership

Reflecting on her leadership skills, Seoyoon shared her experience organizing an information booth to assist international students in settling into the new city. This allowed her to showcase her ability to direct, inform, and lead, contributing to the development of her leadership skills. Seoyoon also acknowledged her growth in public speaking during round table discussions.

*“Public speaking has always been a challenge for me. Being able to voice my own thoughts and those of people whom I have worked with these past few weeks has been an important personal achievement and inspired me to want to develop leadership skills that I can showcase more publicly, and not those just behind the scenes.”*



**Fall  
2023**

## Haley Hood: Advocating for social change

When she moved to Chile for her co-op work as a student researcher with Fundacion Ciencia & Vida, Haley became friends with a nurse who was a volunteer for a Chilean foundation called Tremendas, which addresses the lack of youth representation and empowers girls, adolescents, and young people to actively participate in social and environmental transformation, with a focus on collective leadership and influencing positive change.

Tremendas was raising awareness about abortion rights in response to a new proposed constitution that was set to minimize women's rights and make abortion illegal.

*"I was passionate about the cause and organized a fundraiser at a student housing complex in Santiago. I spoke about the issue, sold drinks, and raised over 100,000 CLP, which went directly to the Tremendas Foundation. During this fundraiser I encouraged the students to join me advocating for the organization and what it stands for during a peaceful protest, where I had the privilege of speaking to motivated young women in Chile."*

### Supporting the UN SDGs

Haley's community engagement activity primarily addressed United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) 5: Gender Equality. Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and Haley's work was focused on advocating for women's rights, particularly concerning abortion, and contributing to the broader global agenda of creating a more equitable and just society for women.

The fundraiser and campaign raised awareness about the challenges faced by women in Chile regarding abortion rights. Many individuals in the community may not have been fully aware of the extent of the issue, and the project served as a platform to educate and inform.

### A meaningful contribution to her host community

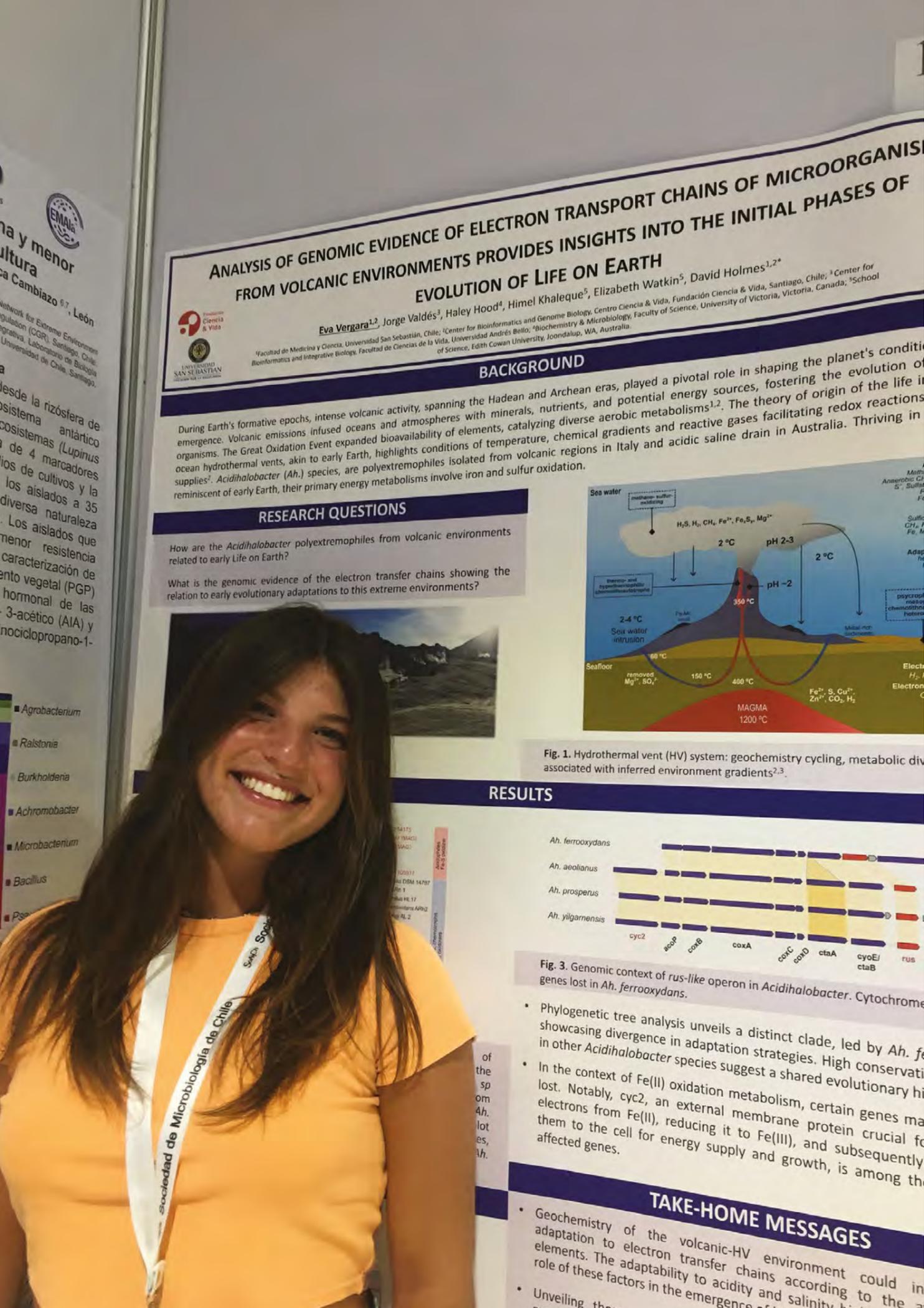
This project made a meaningful contribution to the host community by creating awareness, providing financial support, empowering women, catalyzing change, and inspiring continued involvement in the cause of gender equality, particularly in the context of women's reproductive rights in Chile.

### Developing cultural intelligence

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) played a pivotal role throughout Haley's community engagement activity. Understanding and speaking Spanish were essential components of effective communication with the local community. CQ also helped Haley navigate cultural nuances and sensitivities in the Chilean context. This was particularly crucial in such a politically charged environment, where missteps could have unintended consequences.

### A focus on leadership

This activity served as a powerful platform for the development of leadership skills, providing a transformative experience that contributed to personal and professional growth. Taking the initiative to address a pressing issue, especially as a foreigner in a new cultural context, required a clear vision and a commitment to making a positive impact. The project allowed Haley to cultivate the ability to identify a need, envision a solution, and take the necessary steps towards change.





Law

## Nic Olson: Promoting harm reduction

When Nic took on a work term with the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA) in Lithuania, he led an in-person Drug Checking Capacity-Building Meeting between harm reduction advocates, representatives from Lithuania’s Ministry of Tobacco and Alcohol Control Department, and service-providers (Young Wave drug checking services) to discuss current drug checking services in Lithuania. This was the first time that frontline drug checking service providers were brought together by EHRA.

One of the goals was to build relationships between government workers who are supportive of harm reduction, and peer workers who provide frontline services in a grassroots format, to help build working relationships that will help build capacity for harm reduction programs in the future.

### Supporting the UN SDGs

While harm reduction as a framework is not specifically focused on prevention and treatment, the Drug Checking Capacity-Building Meeting addressed UN SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, specifically SDG Target 3.5: Substance Abuse, by supporting drug checking programs which seek to reduce physical and social harms experienced by people who use drugs.

### A meaningful contribution to his host community

The Drug Checking Capacity-Building Meeting included Young Wave, a youth peer-led organization, in discussions around harm reduction and drug checking services. This was the first time that Young Wave was invited to be a part of such discussions in Lithuania, where historical harm reduction approaches are led exclusively by government public health. The meeting also included a discussion of drug checking data and raised good questions about drug trends, and a frank discussion about each stakeholder’s goals, needs, and dreams regarding future drug checking services. The meeting started important conversations that will hopefully lead to continued open-dialogue and creative problem solving in the drug checking community.

### Developing cultural intelligence

The Drug Checking Capacity-Building Meeting required Nic to acknowledge and build upon his CQ Strategy, since he had focused much of his educational, work, and spare time on advocacy in Canada around drug policy reform. As a result, he had to be conscious of his assumptions around drug policy issues and how they likely differ from the realities in the Lithuanian context. As one of the facilitators of the meeting, Nic had to present his experiences, findings, and knowledge in a way that acknowledged and valued the experiences of people from a different background and culture, and in this case, different knowledge and context of drug policy and drug trends.

### A focus on leadership

Participating and facilitating the Drug Checking Capacity-Building Meeting allowed Nic to build leadership skills while ensuring balanced and equitable participation from all stakeholders.

*“While I was supported by EHRA staff at the meeting, I was also exclusively in charge of presenting the findings from the 2023 Drug Checking Report. This allowed me to guide conversation and ask for input and analysis from stakeholders who might have a different understanding of the data based on their local expertise. This meant that I was able to practice facilitation of a meeting and discussion and was able to effectively broaden the dialogue and eventually bring the discussion back on topic when it strayed a bit further from the information that was part of my presentation.”*

Nic also initiated a connection between EHRA and Substance UVic, a drug checking organization connected to the University of Victoria.



Health Information Science

## Jennifer Ramirez-Betancur: Empowering communities through a micro-forest initiative

During Jennifer's work term with Aga Khan University Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya, she took part in the Micro-Forest Initiative led by Aga Khan Foundation, which involved hosting a tree planting day in collaboration with Ismaili CIVIC and other organizations. Through this event, Aga Khan Foundation successfully planted a micro-forest at Green Acorn Kindergarten and increased awareness of sustainable development practices within the community.

### Supporting the UN SDGs

Jennifer helped kick off the event with an educational session on the importance of endemic, Indigenous species and the importance of planting a variety of food, medicinal and agricultural plants. Specifically, she facilitated the event to support these United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals in the following ways:

1. Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3): The micro-forest initiative contributed directly to community well-being, enhancing the environment and promoting clean air. It served as a space for outdoor activities that positively impact health.
2. Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11): Micro-forests, with their rapid growth in urban and rural areas, align with the goal of creating sustainable and resilient communities. They improve green spaces and biodiversity.
3. Climate Action (SDG 13): The initiative supported climate action by planting trees, playing a crucial role in carbon sequestration and mitigating the impacts of climate change.
4. Life on Land (SDG 15): The micro-forest contributed to terrestrial biodiversity, providing a habitat for various species and promoting the overall health of ecosystems on land.

### A meaningful contribution to her host community

Through this micro-forest initiative, Jennifer was able to contribute to her host community by addressing critical global challenges outlined in the UN SDGs. This initiative enhanced the region's biodiversity, promoted environmental awareness among children, and laid the foundation for sustainable practices.

### Developing cultural intelligence

This initiative required an understanding and consideration of various cultural nuances. From coordinating with different groups to tailoring event marketing strategies to resonate with each segment, Jennifer had the opportunity to engage with the Aga Khan Foundation, Ismaili CIVIC, and local community members.

*"Understanding different cultural nuances was crucial in bringing everyone together for a successful event. It was also instrumental in navigating diverse perspectives and ensuring the activity resonated with the cultural context of the community. It enabled me to approach environmental challenges in a culturally sensitive manner, fostering a deeper connection between the initiative and the community's values."*

### A focus on leadership

This project was a significant milestone in Jennifer's personal development, particularly in enhancing her public speaking, confidence, and leadership skills. Taking a lead in guiding groups during tree planting sessions strengthened her initiative and organizational abilities and her direct involvement in the project's execution helped Jennifer to develop effective decision-making and coordination skills.

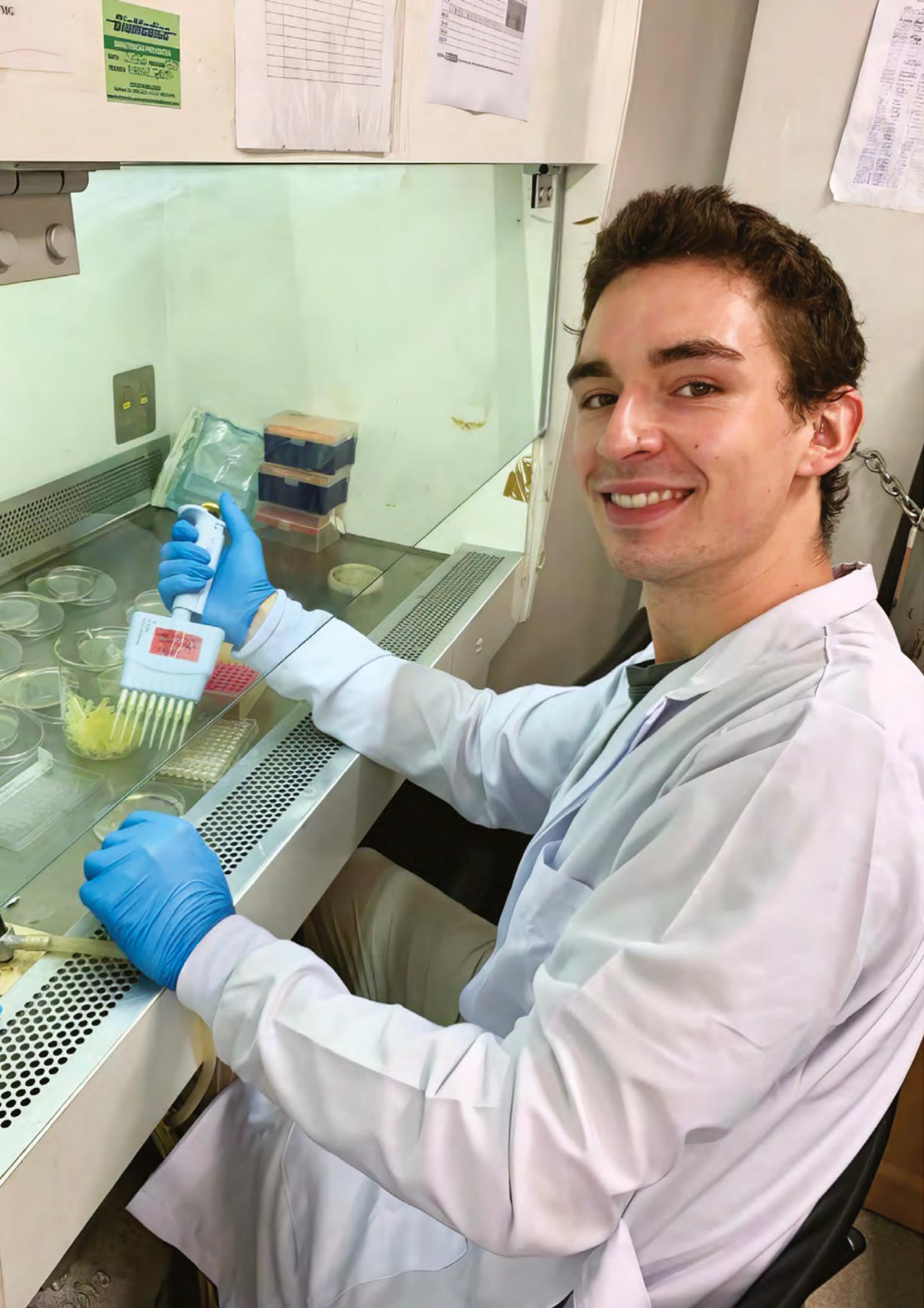
### Leaving a lasting impact

*"The opportunity to leave a lasting environmental legacy in Kenya was profoundly rewarding. The most heartening aspect was interacting with the children, sharing the excitement of planting and caring for the Earth. This initiative was not just about planting trees; it was about planting seeds of environmental consciousness in young minds."*

This experience was a catalyst for community engagement, environmental education, and personal and professional growth. The initiative's success in achieving its objectives and contributing to the UN SDGs was significantly enhanced by the collective effort, cultural intelligence, and leadership displayed throughout the project.



**Spring  
2023**



## Civil Engineering

# Robin Brooks: Fostering stronger relationships amongst academics

Robin traveled to Belo Horizonte, Brazil for a co-op work term doing research on water systems with the Federal University of Minas Gerais within the Department of Environmental and Sanitary Engineering. His research focused on the surveillance of antimicrobial resistance indicators and contributed to a larger project that included a team of master's and PhD students, as well as graduates, professors and an international network. At the end of his co-op, Robin organised, facilitated and hosted a series of roundtable styled discussions with these research group members to bring the community together and develop his leadership skills.

### Supporting the UN SDGs

Robin's research and community engagement activity contributed to SDG 4: Quality Education, by providing researchers with the opportunity to assess and address everyone's understanding of the project and outcomes.

It also addressed SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, by sharing information about the status of Brazilian drinking and wastewater systems. This motivated some of the members to independently further explore these topics, considering connections between their health, the status of related infrastructure, and how this may compare to other communities/countries.

Robin's work term also supported SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals, by developing an ongoing international relationship between researchers that facilitates an exchange of knowledge and resources.

### Developing cultural intelligence

During his co-op term, Robin applied his CQ Drive by using every opportunity to speak in Portuguese to express respect and interest. This competency was enhanced due to its use in a leadership role, and the vulnerability required to use the language. The outcome was meaningful engagement, which was apparent from the receptive attitudes, the comments on his language, and the gratitude shared for continuously expressing such interest and willingness to learn.

He also developed his CQ Action by adjusting the style and length of discussions to support the group's cultural approach. This included following a non-linear path in discussion, being open to personal conversations and having a relaxed attitude towards time and deadlines.

### A focus on leadership

Robin's project helped him develop his leadership and coordination skills as he navigated colleagues' schedules and made requests in an appropriate way.

*"This opportunity allowed me to look for new ways to operate as a leader in a new environment, and sometimes, in a new language. It required networking, providing direction, and leading people, discussions, and the disbursement of findings."*



## Biology

# Morgan Chisan: Leading a blood drive in Nairobi, Kenya

Morgan completed a co-op work term as a research assistant at Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH) in Nairobi, Kenya. She focused on pediatric neurology and conducted a study that explores the burden of care experienced by caregivers of children diagnosed with ADHD. Her role involved creating codebooks, collecting data, and editing and crafting various forms of literature.

### A meaningful contribution to her host community

As her community outreach activity, Morgan initiated a blood donation drive at the hospital to address the blood shortage in Kenya, which has grown since the COVID-19 pandemic. She focused on encouraging staff to donate alongside their peers and worked with the pediatrics and marketing team at AKUH to promote the drive.

### Supporting the UN SDGs

The blood drive aimed to foster a culture of blood donation in Kenya and supported SDG 3: Good Health and Well Being, as blood plays a critical role in health care and raising awareness about the need for blood donations is critical.

### Developing cultural intelligence

Morgan developed her CQ Drive during her coordination of the blood drive. This included understanding and respecting the policies and standards within the local healthcare system. As the blood drive took place during the month of Ramadhan, she also applied her CQ Knowledge by being aware of cultural observances, ensuring the blood drive hours enabled those observing Ramadhan to donate at times that best supported their needs and preferences.

### A focus on leadership

Hosting an event of this nature not only served a practical purpose but also fostered a profound sense of belonging within the community. By taking the initiative to organize this event, Morgan not only had the opportunity to meet a diverse array of individuals whom she might not have otherwise encountered but also provided a platform for friends outside the hospital to engage in blood donation for the first time. Seeing individuals that she had met in her initial weeks in the country come forward to donate blood was incredibly rewarding to Morgan. It highlighted the impact that such initiatives can have in bringing people together, transcending professional boundaries, and fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. Through this event, Morgan not only facilitated a valuable contribution to the healthcare system but also forged meaningful connections and established a sense of camaraderie that transcends the workplace.

*"This journey has not only expanded my global perspective but has also nurtured newfound self-confidence and self-discovery, revealing facets of myself I might never have uncovered otherwise. I have become more confident in conducting myself in unfamiliar environments, whether these be work-related or recreational, and have learnt to trust my instincts while abroad."*



## Commerce

# Louisa Krusekopf: Building a carpool community

Louisa completed an international co-op work term in Southern Germany, where she worked as a trainee of operations at Spa & Resort Bachmair Weissach, about one hour south of Munich at the edge of the Alps.

### A meaningful contribution to her host community

For her community engagement activity, Louisa developed a carpooling community to help hotel employees travel between employee housing and the main hotel. The objective was to make it easier for employees who did not have their own vehicles to get to and from work, as well as to reduce the number of overall trips. There was a lack of reliable public transit in this rural community.

### Supporting the UN SDGs

Louisa's work supported the following SDGs:

1. Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11): attempted to reduce the number of trips taken by single occupancy cars
2. Climate Action (SDG 13): worked to reduce the carbon footprint of the hotel and help fight climate change.

*"As employees, we make up a portion of the town's population. This project created connections between employees that may not have otherwise been formed. It formed a network of open-minded individuals who want to help each other and contribute positively to their community and environmental initiatives. The host community is also affected due to the environmental impacts that the project has. There are less people on the sometimes-overflowing buses and less cars on the road."*

### Developing cultural intelligence

Louisa applied her CQ Action by using her knowledge of German language to create carpool sign-up announcements in German and English to promote the initiative. She also developed this competency by interacting with German and international colleagues and learning about accepted verbal and non-verbal formalities.

### An impactful experience

*"I would encourage anyone who is considering an international co-op to give it a try. You learn so much more from the experience than just what you get at your workplace. As a business student, I was worried that my job wouldn't connect well with my studies, but I have gained and expanded on many skills such as communication, conflict resolution, confidence, problem solving and responsibility, that will forever be helpful to me in my future career. I can see myself doing another international co-op work term."*



## Commerce

# Damon Langford: Addressing poverty and education through a t-shirt campaign

Damon traveled to Bangkok, Thailand for his work term with CDG Thailand, where he contributed to a project led by the company's foundation "Code Their Dreams." This initiative aims to empower young people through technologies and was being re-invigorated following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Damon proposed that the program shift from teaching basic programming languages to educating students about artificial intelligence (AI). He put together a comprehensive lesson plan that includes hands-on and practical training that will be used by Code Their Dreams in the future.

## A meaningful contribution to his host community

To thank CDG and the city of Bangkok for providing him with so many opportunities to grow and learn, Damon coordinated a merch campaign for his building that raised funds for a local charity. Over the course of his campaign, he sold 75 shirts and raised over 29,400 THB for charity. He led the entire production process, from designing the graphics to finding a manufacturer, getting samples made and approved, promoting the campaign and tracking payments.

*"We were able to hand out food to impoverished communities and to send 4 kids to school for one year each. I was really surprised that we were able to do so much. I wanted this to be something that could be done regularly so CDG can continue to send kids to school. What I have done is reached out to the next wave of international students coming to Thailand and asked for one representative to assist in helping me run this again while I am in Canada."*

## Supporting the UN SDGs

Damon's community engagement initiative addressed the following SDGs:

1. Quality Education (SDG 4): provided the opportunity for four students from impoverished communities to attend school for a year.
2. Zero Hunger (SDG 2): Bangkok has a large wealth disparity, and this initiative made it possible to provide food to locals living in poverty.

## Developing cultural intelligence

Damon developed his CQ Drive by learning about local customs and ways of showing respect. In Thailand, the ultimate form of respect is called the "Wai", which involves putting your hands together and making a short bow to the person you are speaking to. When Damon was handing out food, he did the Wai and people appreciated it because it showed that he was not doing this out of pity for them but because he respected them.

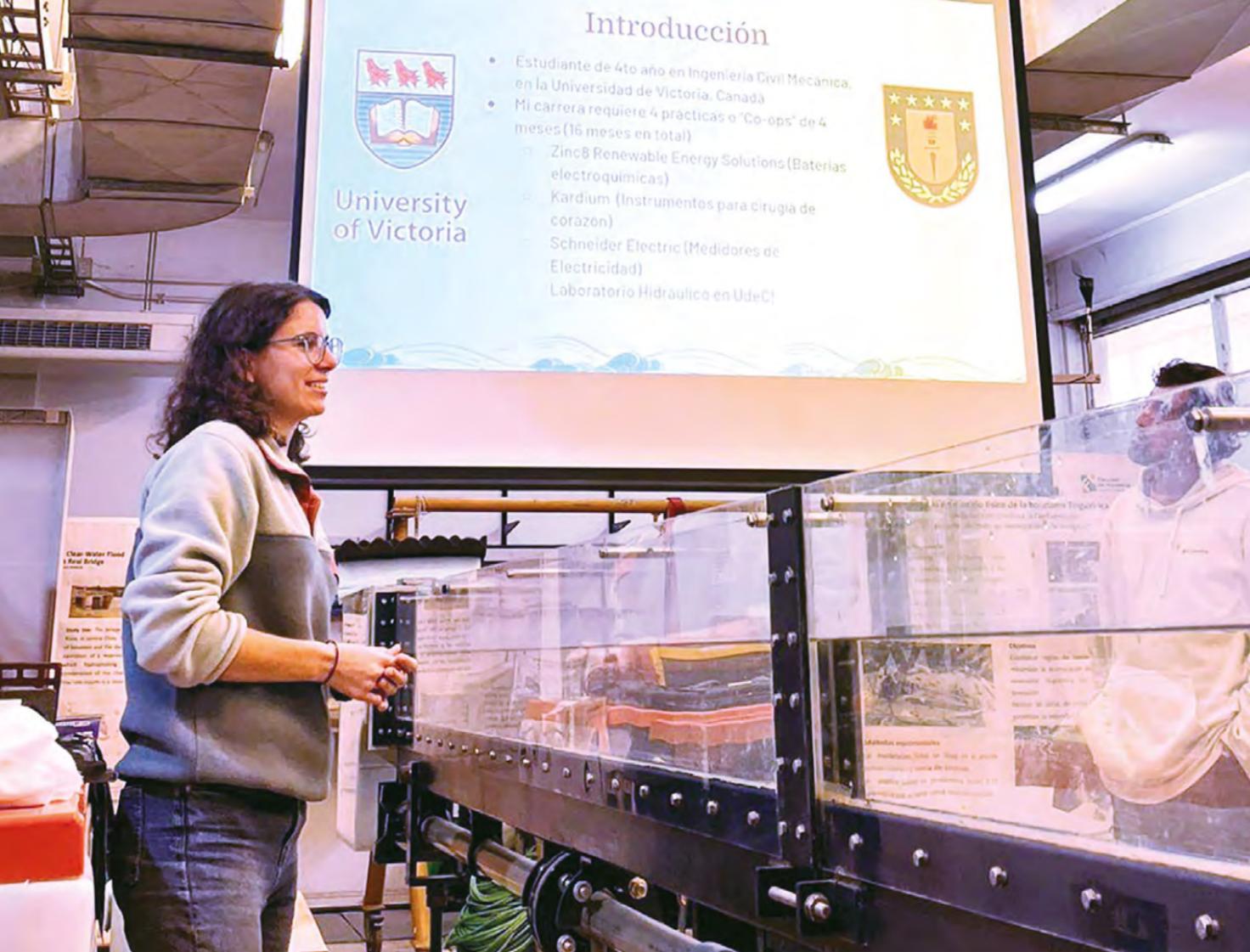
He also applied his CQ Action by approaching problems with respect.

*"One of the things I experienced while getting the shirts printed was having some errors on the first sample. In Thailand respect is a major part of day-to-day life, and especially in the workplace. One of the ways this manifests itself is called "saving face", where people won't tell you directly that you are doing something wrong but instead indirectly hint at it. When my printing was going wrong, I needed to tell the manufacturer in a way that came across as very respectful and not too pointed as not to damage our relationship."*

## A focus on leadership

The t-shirt campaign helped Damon develop his leadership skills as he was responsible for all stages of the project. This included, design, manufacturing, sales, production and organizing the financial aspect.

*"Within the exchange bubble I was in, it made me fairly respected which will have a long term impact if I was to reach out to any of the exchangers seeking advice or job ops in the future. I also learned how to deal with foreign manufacturers which is a skill that many import/export companies would be very keen at hiring."*



## Mechanical Engineering

# Mariana Latta Suazo: Supporting sustainable design through a wave generator tool

Mariana traveled to Chile to work in the Hydraulics Lab at the Universidad de Concepción, where she designed a wave generator that consisted of a motor-operated paddle in a narrow water channel. The wave generator shows wave propagation at various speeds and amplitudes and is used as an educational tool for students. Students will use the tool to compete at designing wave dissipating structures.

### A meaningful contribution to her host community

For her community engagement activity, Mariana led an interactive tutorial and demonstration to fourth-year civil engineering students. The goal was to give students hands-on and visual examples to reinforce material they learned in the classroom. The wave generator was used to demonstrate wave propagation,

orbital wave motion, wave shoaling, different types of wave breaks, and wave dissipating structures like gabions and breakwaters. Students who attended the event gained a deeper understanding of these different concepts, and it sparked conversations about how to protect our coasts and cities from waves.

*"I used different props, like gabions, foam, ping pong balls, and small buoys to discuss reflection and linear wave theory. Then, I showed beaches with different slopes, and we observed all three different types of wave breaking. Afterwards, the students did a quick exercise to confirm that the theory matched the waves we were seeing. The entire presentation was in Spanish, and I felt really happy about how fluid and clear my explanations sounded."*

### Supporting the UN SDGs

This project contributed to various UN SDGs, including:

1. Quality Education (SDG 4): The wave generator gave students visual examples of concepts learned in class and helped solidify these learnings.
2. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9): helped students learn about coastal engineering and sustainable design.
3. Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11): supported an understanding of interactive design and the impact of waves on cities and human populations.

*"I learned so much about coastal engineering and it certainly changed the way I look at the ocean. It was very interesting to learn about breakwaters, and think about Ogden Point in Victoria, and how many times I've walked on it without really thinking about waves and their effect on our city. I will take this knowledge and experience back to Canada with me and apply them throughout the rest of my engineering career, which I hope to be related to sustainability."*

### Developing cultural intelligence

Marina applied her CQ Drive by learning about the geography of Chile, including visiting beaches to study applications of coastal engineering. She was able to recognize different wave types and why they happened, and the protection that some coastal features offered. This gave her a solid understanding to speak about when she gave her presentation to the students.

She also used CQ Knowledge leading up to and during the event by gaining knowledge regarding how the university ran and the different value systems, which included learning how to address her supervisor and lab technician with the formal pronoun "usted" to demonstrate respect. She also learned that she could address the students as the informal "tu" during the presentation, as they were considered equals due to their similar ages and student status.

### A focus on leadership

Leading the event helped Mariana to develop her leadership skills. She had to work on her public speaking, and this helped develop her confidence.

*"I think an international co-op is an excellent way to get to know yourself better. While abroad, you're surrounded by unfamiliar places and people, and it can be both challenging and rewarding to learn how to live in this new place. This experience is all about pushing your comfort zone constantly and growing as a result. I highly recommend it to anyone who's considering it!"*



## Recreation And Health Education

# Kailyn Smith: Educating youth about global sustainability

During Kailyn's work term at United World Colleges (UWC) Thailand, she engaged students in outdoor learning experiences, led outdoor education programs such as kayaking, sailing, rock climbing, and hiking, provided hands-on opportunities for experiential learning, developing problem-solving and teamwork skills, and encouraged students to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for their outdoor surroundings.

## Supporting the UN SDGs

In addition to promoting education, Kailyn actively engaged in community service projects that addressed a range of SDGs.

1. Quality Education (SDG 4): educated students about UWC Thailand's mission and educational values and created an interactive experience with the aim for classmates to work together and deepen their understanding of global issues.
2. Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11): asked students to identify and describe a sustainable infrastructure or community projects around the school (example, community garden, park, or green space).
3. Life Below Water (SDG 14) and Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12): participated in a beach cleanup initiative organized by Sustainable Mai Khao.
4. Life on Land (SDG 15): volunteered at an elephant sanctuary, where she assisted in the care of rescued elephants by helping with food preparation and farming

## A meaningful contribution to her host community

Kailyn ran a community engagement activity that incorporated the history and information about what UWC Thailand stands for and highlighted each UN SDG initiative.

She used an app called Goose Chase to make interactive 'missions' that had children either submit a photo, video, text, or geographical pinpoint. The activity accommodated 30 students (a typical classroom size) and the students were divided into five groups of six students each. Kailyn made three different orienteering activities for different age groups: Kindergarten to Grade 3, Grade 4-7, and Grade 7-10. Each orienteering session was about an hour long.

*"My primary objective is to help create engagement and participation in the outdoor education program across various grade levels. This involved teaching, facilitation, and project developing. The work environment is mostly spent outside teaching sailing, kayaking, and rock climbing."*

## Developing cultural intelligence

Kailyn demonstrated her CQ Action by aligning the activity with the school's values and objectives. This included collaborating closely with the director of community engagement to ensure that the activity was a positive addition to UWC Thailand. Additionally, she used flexibility and cultural awareness to design age-appropriate orienteering activities and adapted the activities to the needs of different student groups. She also applied CQ Knowledge by understanding and incorporating the school's cultural values and objectives into the activity. By collaborating closely with the director of community engagement, she gained insights into the school's mission and the importance of promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity.

## A focus on leadership

Organizing and leading the activity developed Kailyn's leadership skills, public speaking abilities, and problem-solving capabilities as she navigated challenges throughout the process and engaged with students.

After the launch of her orienteering activity, she was also part of the OFFSEAS Conference, where 200+ participants from the outdoor education sector in Southeast Asia came together to learn and network at UWC Thailand. Kailyn was able to connect with people and use her orienteering experience skills in her interactions.



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