

## LONDON STUDENTS VOLUNTEERING IN VANCOUVER DIARY

### **FEBRUARY 11<sup>th</sup> 2010 - GREAT WARM WELCOME**

5.30am Barnet students meet at Mill Hill mainline. First alarm of the day as one student forgets their ticket!! His mum to the rescue and off we go through the snow to Gatwick. 7.15am and we arrive, where we meet the two students from Harrow college who are already queuing for departure.

2<sup>nd</sup> alarm of the day as one of our students exceeds the baggage allowance and receives an extra bill of one hundred pounds!!

Slight delay then, as we wait for one group of students and then we're good to go.

10 hour flight with the usual in-flight catering and the same film going around and around. Very little sleep for all of us, but at least a nice uneventful flight with very little turbulence.

Arrive at Vancouver at 12.40pm Canadian time.

Airport deserted which we didn't expect. However it allows us to go through customs with relative ease. Through baggage reclaim and then we're met by the representative from Vancouver Community College. Great, warm welcome and bundled into taxis for the ride to the hotel.

Book in at the hotel and then we're met by the Dean of School of Hospitality J.R. What a welcome! We take a short 20 minute walk to the college where we are given a whistle stop tour of the facilities. The place is huge! With three floors of kitchens. Our students are allowed into a class which is just finishing where we get to meet Canadian students and taste the chocolate mousse they have just made.



Next, to the restaurant where we meet J.C who is the department head for Culinary Arts. J.C takes the students in small groups to see the production kitchen which we can also see on a screen in the restaurant.

We are then served the most fantastic five course dinner. These guys know how to cook and put on a show. Under the influence of the food and a ten hour flight it is visible to all that our students and staff are almost asleep standing up. But, in order not to fall into the trap of going back to the hotel and then being wide awake at three in the morning VCC have arranged for us to go to a local theatre where the four host nations put on a show about aboriginal history and culture together with the Vancouver Symphony orchestra. Another amazing event!



Finally a short walk to the hotel and sleep.

## **FRIDAY 12<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY - HOST NATION PRIDE**

Left to our own devices, the majority slept in to catch up.

Whilst we were eating breakfast one of the staff told us that if we were quick, the Olympic flame was about to be paraded down the street running across the end of our block. A quick sprint down the road and we saw all the police motor cycles at the top of the hill, followed by the mounted police, the security running either side of the torch and the whole media vanguard.

I don't think any of us will get that close to the Olympic flame again!



Some of us then went sightseeing and shopping.

The Canadians are just the friendliest, most welcoming people. Great city. Wide streets, terrific shops and something we're still trying to get used to is the way in which nearly all obey the traffic lights at pedestrian crossings even when there is no traffic coming. We also located the place where we decided to watch the Olympic opening ceremony. Having had a short break back at the hotel we left at about 4.30pm to be in place and ready for the opening ceremony at 6pm. The atmosphere was electric. There are so many shows and events going on in Vancouver it is hard to know when to stop. We have watched a choir singing religious and aboriginal music in the square, watched the protest against the money being spent on the Olympics by those who think it should have been spent on housing and the poor, watch people from the four host nations put on dance and song in their native costume and watched teenagers perform acrobatics and circus tricks.

Unfortunately it started to rain heavily so we sought cover by the ice rink in the centre of the square where we then met staff from one of the local radio stations '100.5 The Peak' who interviewed one of our students on their views on Vancouver from a tourist perspective.

Finally we stood in the rain with hundreds of Canadians and tourists and watched the Olympic opening ceremony.

They are so patriotic here and quite rightly so as they definitely know how to put on a show. What an amazing event. The pride they have in being the host nation is overwhelming.



### **SATURDAY 13<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY - COOKING WITH ABORIGNIAL STUDENTS**

Orientation day today at VCC. 10am and we arrive at the college to meet J.R, some of his staff and a group of students from Quebec. Once again the hospitality is amazing and we are loaded down with badges and gifts.

Then our students stay behind because we asked on the first night if our students could cook with VCC students. So at the moment of trying this, our students are cooking with aboriginal students, smoking salmon and catering for a fashion show linked with the Olympics. 5pm start and they should finish at midnight.

