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GLBL Reflection

Throughout my academic, personal, and professional journey, I have been deeply engaged in global and cultural learning, particularly through research, community outreach, and intercultural experiences. My work with the Microbiology Outreach Foundation (MOF), international travel, multilingualism, and academic research has shaped my understanding of global competency, the importance of equitable education, and the role of science in addressing global challenges. This reflection explores my view on how these experiences have transformed my knowledge and values towards global competency.

One of the most significant experiences I have had is through MOF, a non-profit organization that I founded to provide hands-on microbiology education to underserved rural and Indigenous communities. While the initiative began with a relatively local focus, I’ve come to realize that microbiology’s role in health, sustainability, food security, and climate change has some major implications. Working with rural communities within British Columbia has provided insight as to the deep educational disparities and inaccessibility to knowledge sharing systems. By adapting MOF’s programs to different cultural contexts and increasing its accessibility, I have developed a deeper appreciation for how knowledge should be presented in ways that are culturally relevant and accessible. This experience has shaped my commitment to science communication and equitable education.

In addition to my outreach work, my research projects have provided me with a global perspective. My work on permafrost microbiology and its role in the carbon cycle and methane emission has deepened my awareness of how microbial communities contribute to our world. Through presenting my findings both locally and nationally, I have engaged with researchers worldwide. This project challenged me to analyze the situation beyond local concerns to address the international issues that need to be addressed.

My global learning extends beyond academics into language and cultural experiences. As a multilingual, fluent in Spanish, English, and French, first-generation immigrant, I have navigated through a diverse cultural upbringing. My ability to communicate in multiple languages has allowed me to become adaptable, emotionally intelligent, and understanding. From attending cultural events and becoming immersed in various cultures to translating for patients in the emergency department, I have had the privilege of growing from the diversity to develop a holistic view. I no longer do only what is needed in my daily decisions but what makes sense culturally, emotionally, and critically. This is demonstrated through my translation for non-English speakers in the local emergency department. I was not trained or told to help anyone in this way, but when an immigrant shows up alone, concerned, and isolated, I feel that it is my duty to make them feel safe, understood, and informed. Expanding on this, volunteering at Kamloops Immigrant Services has given me a unique perspective on the plethora of challenges that newcomers face, which has allowed me to reflect on my own journey as a first-generation immigrant and how language has played a vital role in my own cultural integration.

Through my experiences while travelling, I have solidified my understanding of cultural diversity and global connectedness. My trips to Colombia, Argentina, Uruguay, the United States of America, and Europe have exposed me to different cultural norms and perspectives. Whether it was experiencing the history of Buenos Aires, the culinary richness of Italy, or the coastal beauty of Portugal, all my experiences have demonstrated the importance of cultural richness in our societies. These experiences have not only expanded my worldview but also reinforced the importance of global cooperation, knowledge sharing, and cultural humility. Understanding global issues such as climate change, healthcare accessibility, and education inequities requires me to develop both my scientific thinking and cultural sensitivity. Moving forward throughout my career as a researcher and physician, I will apply these life lessons to seeing my patients, conducting my research projects, all while ensuring that my work is equitable, inclusive, and globally relevant.

My journey has been shaped by a blend of scientific thinking and research, community engagement, multilingualism, and culture. By continuing to try new food, attempt to put myself in others’ shoes, embrace diverse perspectives, and engage in cross-disciplinary work, I am committed to contributing to a more inclusive society.