

>> They were amazing, you know. And one of the, this does not seem like a, a big deal. But, to me, it was a huge deal. One of the students who was working in the shop, she was at the front desk. And when people would come up to the, the desk, she would make sure she was pronouncing their names correctly.

>> Yeah.

>> And she would ask them their name and they would tell her. And then, she would say their name back and she would say, “Was that correct?”, before she would continue. And I just thought I am so proud of you, right now. And your mom would be so proud of you, right now. And I actually messaged her mom and told her mom. I said, “You should be really proud.”

>> That was Kelly Hoyt, Teaching and Learning Consultant for International Education with Mohawk College. This is “The Extra Mile” podcast and I’m your host, Elyse Pipitone.

[ Music ]

Kelly Hoyt has been running study abroad trips for students for many years at Mohawk College. These trips have the hallmark of changing perspectives on the world and on certain work that students are doing in their field. This particular trip to Greece at Ritsona Refugee Camp was personal for me because I was there, as well. We’ll join Kelly to talk about her experience running these programs, as well as how she feels about coming back home after our recent trip. Kelly Hoyt, thank you for joining me today, to talk about the work that you do. And you are someone at the college that I see as very passionate and who really brings your whole self to the work that you do. And I know that the students and people that work with you really appreciate just you being you. So, in the spirit of that, I want to talk to you about some of the work and initiatives that you started at the college. As well as one of our recent trips I had the pleasure of going on with you to Greece. So, thank you for being here.

>> Thank you, for having me.

>> So, why don’t we start by talking about what prompted you to be interested in things like Global Experience trips for students. And when did this start for you?

>> So, I would say about, it started about 12 years, ago, for me. And it was actually when I was at CEDP. So, the College Educators Development Program. And I heard another faculty talking about doing trips abroad with students. And it just really sparked my interest. And I thought, you know, that is something I would love to do. And I’ve been teaching at the college for 17 years. And I’ve always enjoyed doing, kind of, out of the box learning experiences. They’re calling them experiential learning experiences, now. And I’ve always enjoyed taking students on field trips and outside of the classroom. When I taught in Brantford, I taught a course called Legislation and we were right across from the courthouse. So, every year I would arrange.

>> How convenient.

>> Yeah. I would arrange for my student groups to go and sit in court and watch youth court, so that they could see what a youth might experience in the courtroom. And then, we could bring it back to the classroom and talk about a child and youth worker's role in the courtroom with a youth who was going through the youth justice system.

>> Yeah.

>> And I think there's just a lot of value in those opportunities to actually see and, and experience real life situations. So, hearing this faculty member talk about student trips abroad sparked my interest. I started looking into it and how this could possibly work at Mohawk College. And it was a long process from the idea to the actual happening of it for the first time. And the first trip was to Costa Rica.

>> And when was that? Roughly.

>> Roughly, I'm going to say 2008.

>> Okay.

>> Yeah. So, and partnering with Cross-Cultural Solutions. And I looked into a lot of different agencies who facilitate these types of service learning opportunities. And worked with people at the college to make decisions around what company we were going to use. And Cross-Cultural Solutions was one that I really appreciated for their level of safety. I think that's, obviously, really important when we're taking students abroad, that their safety is, is the priority. So, that was the piece I liked. And then, it kind of grew from there.

>> So, what, what did you have to do to, kind of, sell people at the college on the idea of bringing students abroad?

>> Well, not a lot of people were doing it.

>> Yeah.

>> So, it was, it was, there were people doing it, but just not a lot of people were doing it. And I feel like I was a kind of a bit ahead of my time, in terms of this work. Now, we see it's part of the strategic plan. And I'm excited about that, because it's, it's obviously important for the, the college and the community that we are, you know, increasing globalization for our, for all of our students. So, at that time, I just happened to be working with folks that were open to it. And I was, I was lucky and, kind of, all the ingredients to the recipe were in place for this to come to fruition. So, it was really having the backing of supportive people.

>> Wonderful. And what, what are the big things that students come away with when they're doing things like working in a courthouse or learning abroad, that you just cannot replicate in the classroom?

>> I think having those real-life examples of actual people. You know. You can give case studies in a classroom. And case studies are a value, very valuable

learning tool. But they're not, necessarily, real. And for students to witness these real-life scenarios of people's lives and make the connections to curriculum. It just, it's a different kind of connection that's made.

>> And you, obviously, these students in, in different fields like ECE, social service worker, you're working with humans. And so, do you find these experiences prepare them better and give them, kind of, the training wheels they need to do this type of work?

>> Absolutely. In the beginning, it was strictly child and youth worker students who were participating. Because that's the program, I was teaching it at the time.

>> Sorry. I said ECE. CYC is right.

>> Well, yeah. But EC are, they're also interested in.

>> Okay.

>> These opportunities, as well. But we would talk a lot about, I would link it back to the curriculum around. Here, in Canada, we're working with youth who, and children, where there's communication barriers. Whether it's, you know, autism spectrum or different learning, learning difficulties or different diagnoses that cause.

>> This can take form I many different ways.

>> Right. Right.

>> And people can express these things in different ways, as well. So.

>> That's right. And going to another country and working with youth, well, we have a language barrier. But it's really no different. We find ways to communicate despite those barriers. So, I linked it to the curriculum, that way. Now, with Ritsona, going to Greece, the reason I chose that location is because I know there's been an increase in Syrian people coming to the Hamilton region. And, you know, we're producing human service professionals who don't always have a lot of exposure to, to that population. And I thought, wow, what an opportunity to go into Greece and work in the camp and learn about the crisis from that perspective. And bring it back and actually have that understanding when they're working with families who have had that experience.

>> Right. And this type of trip has the added benefit of, of travel, as well. And, and I think that transforms students. I think we, we had one student on our trip who had never flown, before.

>> Yeah.

>> To another part of the world. So, I think beyond working with Syrian populations in Hamilton, you get the extra perspective of the culture of Greece that you're exposed to. And what it's like to be a displaced population in another country.

>> Right. Yeah.

>> So, let's talk about the trip. You, so after Costa Rica, you've run a number of other outbound trips and I was happy that you were on our trip and that I was able to come with you. Because you have so much knowledge of, you know, what could go wrong. What are the things you need to do in order to make sure those things don't go wrong. And, also, what happens behind the scenes when you're meeting with students to prepare them for something like this. so, maybe we'll start with what, what kind of work goes into and what planning goes into having these pre-meetings with students? And what did you want to set them, what skills did you want to set them up with before we left?

>> Yeah. There is an awful lot of work that goes into pre-trip. And I think the biggest thing is to really build a circle of, of trust and safety. Because you're travelling as a group and you're going to be experiencing things that, that really do push you outside of your comfort zone. And if you don't have trust with the people in your group it's going to be really hard to navigate those things. So, we spend a lot of time together getting to know each other, to start. But, also, increasing levels of trust and cohesion within the group. So, we do a lot of team building activities. We go out for dinner. You know. We, we spend time together. We get to know each other. We do language lessons. One of the things I would do differently, this time, is we spent a lot of time learning Arabic. But I think we should have spent more time learning Greek.

>> Yeah.

>> I think that would have been more useful. Because in the camp, we had a lot of translators helping us. And we, they had tools there, as well, like cars that, you know, if we were trying to communicate. And Arabic is a really tough language to learn. And the students, basically, at the end of these wonderful lessons provided by [inaudible]. At the end of it they knew how to say hello and goodbye, basically.

>> Yeah.

>> So, it's, it's a tough language. And I think. And a lot of the students talked about that. That, oh, it would have been better if we had an opportunity to learn some, some Greek. But, so there's language lessons. There's, we talk about. We prepare for the trip in terms of potential for culture shock. We talk about reverse culture shock and coming back and what that can be like. We talk about programming and, and what types of things we'll be doing in the volunteer setting. And what, what can we do to prepare. These students put together the Black Legging Drive. And.

>> Yeah. Can you speak a little bit about the drive and the fundraising that goes into a lot of the projects that you?

>> Absolutely. Yeah. So, the Black Legging Drive was we had learnt from Cross-Cultural Solutions that that was one of the items that was of a shortage at the camp. And so, the students started a Black Legging Drive. They, they

put three boxes around the, the college. And people donated black leggings, either used, gently used or new. And we took. We ended up taking 14 extra suitcases full of clothing to the camps that we were able to donate. So, Air Canada was, we tapped into their donation program. And they allowed us to take those extra suitcases at no cost. Other fundraising students do. They did a spaghetti dinner fundraiser in the summer, which was very successful. And they had to work together as a team. And then, a lot of them did individual fundraising on top of that. So, every group I do this with is required to do a large group fundraiser together.

>> Have the students been exposed to anything like this in, in previous coursework? Because I would imagine they, they're learning a lot from the process of how to run a fundraising event, as well.

>> Yeah. This is new to a lot of students. And I mean, some students come in with their own experiences of fundraising. You know, through, through growing up with sports.

>> Right.

>> And different things. But for, for many, it's a new experience. And I think in human services, it's particularly valuable. Because, often, when we're, when we're working in human service agencies, resources are.

>> Right.

>> Hard to come by.

>> And working for a nonprofit.

>> So, fundraising is part of it. So, we link it back to that, as well.

>> So, what were some of the big fears and things that came out in this trust-building exercise with students? Because I think some people don't realize. You know. I, it was new for me to see you running a course like this, where from my experience, you know. Coursework is you have an itinerary you go through. You study your textbook, whatever. But our, this preparation was really about being vulnerable and discussing your fears. And so, that for me was really new. But I thought it made the experience for students and the team so much more cohesive and just helped us understand each other.

>> Absolutely.

>> That much more.

>> I talk a lot with the group about, you know, being open and honest about what they're experiencing. Because we tend to get into trouble if we're experiencing emotion and we're trying to suppress it.

>> Right.

>> And, especially, when we're in a situation that pushes us way out of our comfort zone. And I've seen that with students before in, in previous trips that they're trying. They're almost in a battle with themselves.

>> Yeah.

>> And around, you know, I'm, I'm really homesick but I don't want to admit that. I don't want to talk about that. I want to pretend that that's not happening.

>> We're taught, so much, that, you know.

>> Yeah.

>> You have to be strong and push through or whatever.

>> Right. So, I talk a lot with the group about.

>> Yeah.

>> Being open and honest and being vulnerable. And I also model that. So.

>> Yeah. You do.

>> I talk about my own feelings and, you know. I'm missing my kids, today. I'm having a tough day because I miss home. Or I'm worried about my, my daughter or whatever. I'm just, I, I model that vulnerability. And I think that's, that's a huge first step for helping people to become vulnerable, as well.

>> Helped me.

>> I'm glad.

>> So, we end up getting to Greece and there's a few days of sightseeing in Athens. Can you talk about the process of getting ready to go into Ritsona and a little bit more about the camp that we volunteered with?

>> Yeah. So, the, the Sunday we, we spent some time with the Cross-Cultural Solution staff. And we did an orientation. And they talk a lot about some, some preparatory issues prior to us setting foot in the camp on the Monday. And it's, it's a lot of information, but it's extremely helpful. You know, do's and don'ts. Things that, that are okay to say. Things that aren't okay to say. You know, like, for example.

>> Things you may, really not occur to you.

>> Yeah. Like, we went. It's not something, it's not a good idea to ask a resident in camp how did you get here?

>> Right. Or where are your parents?

>> Or where is your parents? Yeah. So, these types of, kind of, concrete, kind of, do's and don'ts were really important for the students and. And, also, I appreciate the fact it's not coming from us as faculty and staff. It's coming from Cross-Cultural Solutions.

>> Right.

>> So, these are their policies. These are their guidelines. They also talked to us, quite a bit, about the crisis. And, you know, that was really eye-opening for

some students. A lot of, a lot of them didn't know what was happening. And it was, it was hard information to digest, but important for them to digest, for sure.

>> Especially, the situation in Greece where we were. I mean, to understand some more specifics around. What I also found interesting was the Greek perspective on this crisis. I mean, we're kind of caught in the middle of this. And I know some students did interact with local Greek people who either had really positive things to say about what we were doing there. Or, you know, neutral, avoiding things we say.

>> Absolutely. We actually talked to our tour guide who was with us when we were in Athens. And we asked her that question. Like, what is the?

>> What's the mood?

>> What's the feel, here? You know. And she said that exact same thing that some people are very, they want to help. And other people are just angry, like they don't want the refugees here. And so, there's just a wide range of reactions.

>> Yeah. So, let's talk about the realities of the day-to-day in volunteering. And then, I'd like to talk, also, about your Plus/Delta exercise that we did.

>> Sure.

>> Over there. So, why don't we talk about the NGO. So, that's Cross-Cultural Solutions. What were some of the roles that students were doing while they were there?

>> Yeah. So, there was, they split us up into a few different locations in the camp. And the one was the Ritsona Shop. So, in that location residents had an appointment. Once a month they would be able to come into the shop and they were allotted a certain amount of points. And they could come in and do their, their shopping. So, the students' role in that was to help residents find what they're looking for and, often. The challenging part was, often, they couldn't find something. So, if, you know, one of the kids needed a pair of shoes, they might not be able to find a pair of shoes in that particular size. So, that was challenging. And then, part of their role was to also restock the shelves. Make sure there was enough of everything. And to check the residents out. There was a system in place where we had to track the points, the amount of points they had versus the amount of points they were spending. And there was rations on certain things. So, for example, every family, every female in the camp was only allowed one pair of black leggings a month. And what would happen is, sometimes, the males would try to get a pair of black leggings. And we'd have to say no.

>> Right.

>> And that was hard. That was hard to say no. And, or somebody might have spent their points and had excess items. And students and myself would

have to say, I'm sorry, you, you have to put these back because you've, you've gone over your points.

>> Yeah.

>> That was emotional for us. That was, that was really tough. Because we don't have to really think about those things, here. We can go and get what we need and, and go home. We can shop whenever we want. We don't have to make an appointment. I know, sometimes, funds can be limited for people and, and they have to ration. But when we need something we can, generally, get it.

>> Yeah.

>> And there were times where residents would leave without getting something they needed.

>> The other thing, too, is we have networks of people that can help us.

>> That's right.

>> When we're in need, we have family, extended family and friends, and.

>> Yeah.

>> What struck me is that a lot of these families, nuclear families, or just one individual, they were there completely on their own and relying on this system. So.

>> Absolutely.

>> To be the person to say no was, you know, difficult.

>> It was heart-wrenching, at times. And, and we, we talked a lot about this sense of guilt, you know, that we're coming from a very privileged place.

>> I think I heard the word guilt and privilege come out of our students'.

>> Right.

>> Mouth.

>> A lot.

>> More than any other, any other word.

>> Yeah.

>> And, and, and we're, and a lot of students are still processing that. You know. Like, one of the students had said to me, like, my biggest concern before I came here was that there was a crack in my phone. And I can't believe I was worried about that.

>> It's all relative.

>> It's all perspective. Right. So, I, I appreciate that type of learning, though. Because it's like, you know, you can, you can help yourself with perspective, now, when you go home. You can think.



>> Yeah.

>> That when you're getting stressed. You can put things into a different perspective, now. Your, your problems are still your problems and they're legitimate. But maybe it will help you self-regulate or manage those in a different way.

>> Yeah. And beyond the personal, the other thing I took away was, you know, we come back and I'm still hearing in the news things about Trump and about the midterms. And, and about things like caravans coming into the state. And what I took away was I no longer think of Syrian refugees as one glob of people. They are people that we made eye contact with and had personal conversations with.

>> Yes.

>> One of the things CCS did reinforce in the beginning and that you, as well, did was this would be a humanizing experience. So, for students to come back with that perspective along with, you know, this. This image in their mind that they can accompany with news that they hear about anything that happens in the world.

>> That's right.

>> I think is bigger than you can demonstrate while in, in a classroom.

>> Yeah. And you know, one of the things that we tried to help the students with. And we all did this. Is taught let's find the joy in this, even though this is hard.

>> Yeah.

>> There's still joy. Like, I remember a woman coming into the shop and she found a coat. And it was this beautiful beige wool coat. And she was so happy, the smile on her face. And she was.

>> She was showing it off.

>> Dancing around. Right. Modelling it.

>> Yeah.

>> And everybody was laughing and smiling and people still find joy in sorrow. There's always a light to be found. And I think about the falafel guy. Right. He was selling falafels for one year. So, he couldn't have been making any money. But he was doing it every day, selling his falafels. And he was so joyful about that and it was his purpose.

>> Yeah.

>> So, the capacity within the camp. The, you know, despite what people have been through, they still have capacity. And that's what I want my students to focus on. It's not the trauma. It's not the sadness. Let's focus on the capacity and the joy despite. Like, the resilience. I love that.

>> That was one thing that, that also struck me with, you know, seeing people opening their own businesses. And knowing that it's, it's a part of all of us that we want to contribute and that we want to give something back to our world, our community in any way that we can. So, outside of the shop, there are a couple of other roles that students had. There was distribution. So, the tea and milk. And, and another thing CCS did reinforce. There are other, for some context, there's a few other NGO's. And I'm talking to you like you don't know this.

>> Okay.

>> But our NGO was focussed on, kind of, the bread and butter getting, getting people clothed and getting food in them and washing their clothes.

>> Yeah.

>> So.

>> So, there was that.

>> Yeah.

>> There was the laundry facility that the students that were. And I didn't have an opportunity to be in the laundry. But the ones that were in there loved it. They had so much fun and it was.

>> It was my favourite.

>> Yeah. And it sounded like there was more opportunity to really interact with residents in, in the laundry on a more informal basis.

>> Yeah. I was really surprised in how quickly the, kind of, trepidation. That when, on our first day, not knowing what to expect, immediately just dissolved. And it was, you know, I want to find every opportunity to get to know the people I'm working with. And find people to interact with.

>> Yep.

>> So, laundry was popular.

>> Yes. And then, there was the female-friendly space. And, again, I didn't have an opportunity to be in there. But the students that were, were in there loved being there. And just interacting with the women. And, you know, teaching English and just being a part of that whole process. So, lots of different opportunities within the camp. And, you know, great learning for everybody.

>> So, speaking of learning. At the end of our sessions, we would. It was really important to have time to debrief with each other and, kind of, understand things going on and now this was impacting the group. You did an exercise called Plus/Delta. Can you talk about that? And what were some of the big learning moments for you coming out of those exercises?

>> That was a, a strategy I learnt when I went to India with Global Autism. That was part of their process. And we would do a circle and you'd identify

your plus, which was kind of your highlight of the day or your highlight of the last couple days between meetings. And your delta. Which, a delta is a kind of low-lying part of the river, riverbed. Right. So, delta, we, we don't want to say you're negative.

>> Right.

>> Because the negative, this isn't negative, necessarily.

>> Yeah.

>> It's just the low, the low-lying.

>> There's a lot to be learnt.

>> Part.

>> From the delta.

>> That's right. So, everybody would share that. And, you know, people, people were generally very honest about what they were experiencing. And I really feel like that was because of that prework we did. And, also, the modelling that we did. That we were honest about what, what we, what our deltas were, as well. So, it was just an opportunity to kind of touch in, touch base, and see where people were at. And deal with any unfinished business, too, for, for folks that had come up. You know. Some people expressed having difficulty because they weren't able to always take pictures when they wanted to. And it was frustrating for them. And so, it was, it was an opportunity to, kind of, problem solve and work through some of the, the issues that were coming up for people.

>> Did you have any misconceptions about Greece or working with refugees that, that, that changed or something changed your mind when, when you did end up getting there?

>> Absolutely. I mean, I'm, I'm a victim to media just like everyone else. Right. I mean.

>> Yeah.

>> You get this picture in your mind of what it, what it's really like. And, and you think it's. Like, I thought it was just going to be, you know, so much sadness and so much trauma and it's just awful, awful, awful. And there's an element of that. But what became more important in my mind was, again, that, that joy and that resilience and that capacity. And when I switched my focus to that I, the guilt started fading away.

>> Right.

>> And the sadness started fading away. And so, that for me was pretty profound. I won't look. I won't look, now, the same. When I see that on the media or other news stories on the media, I will be able to look beyond that, now. Because everybody who's gone through trauma, there's always resilience behind that. They don't show that.

>> Yeah.

>> They don't show that on the media. Right.

>> It's true. They don't talk about the, the businesses refugees are opening up and the.

>> Right.

>> The initiatives they're starting and.

>> And that's what I want to know about.

>> It's always about the burden on wherever they are or that's where the focus tends to be.

>> And the sad story.

>> Yeah.

>> Right.

>> Yeah.

>> So, that, that's how I am going to look at the world differently, now.

>> Yeah.

>> I don't, generally, watch the news. But, sometimes, you can't avoid it. But when I see those things or hear about those things, I'm going to remember that there's something beyond this that, that is good.

>> Yeah. That's really well-said. I felt the same way. I, I thought going into this I was worried about interacting. I was worried that we were not wanted there. Or that there would be some sort of tension between the residents and the volunteers. Because we're there for a week and gone. But everything that, that we experienced as a group was, you know, invitations in for coffee and children climbing all over us. And, you know what I mean? It was, we were met with open arms and that, to me, was almost a relief.

>> Absolutely. They were extremely welcoming people and just lovely, lovely to get to know.

>> Did you have one learning moment, either before, during, or after, that really stands out in your mind?

>> Again, I think it goes back to the shift for me. You know, I remember being in the shop. And the first day in the shop I sat in front of a computer. Because I was the only one, well, I was with you, and we were trying to work that Excel sheet. Right. And we were, at the time, the only ones.

>> Didn't think we were going to have to do that. Yeah.

>> We had to, we had to work with Excel that day on a laptop, because we were tracking points and all that. And, thank goodness, you were there to help

me. But I remember biting my lip a lot that day because I kept feeling like I wanted to cry. Because I'd see the families come in and, and I saw a little boy that was That was my son's age. And I felt so sad, because I felt guilty because my son doesn't have to do that. You know. And I just, I had to find a way to shift out of that because I kept attaching myself to people's stories. Like.

>> Yeah.

>> You know, what, what has this family been through? Was one of their children lost at sea when they came?

>> Yeah.

>> And I, I was focussing on that.

>> It's so hard not to focus on that.

>> And I had to shift out of that. And I had to, I had to find the joy. I had to find the resilience. And I had to find the capacity. And once I was able to do that, I, I shifted out of the, the sadness. So, that was really profound. And I think that's going to change, change my life and change the way I look at the world, for sure. And I can link that back to, to curriculum in human service programs, as well. Because we're working with vulnerable young people who have been through a lot of trauma. And if we focus on the trauma.

>> Yeah.

>> You know, that is not going to help that, that person. We have to focus on the strengths. We grow from our strengths. We, and we have to find the resilience. And so, I, I really feel like that can link, link very, very well back to what we're learning about working with people, as well.

>> I think that was a huge lesson for our students to learn in terms of boundaries that they need to set for themselves. In terms of emotional growth and, you know, all of those intangibles. When, until you're in it, you don't get.

>> That's right.

>> Thank you, for sharing that. So, what is next for you? We have a meeting with the students coming up. What are we going to be discussing with them?

>> Well, we'll do our Plus/Delta regarding, you know, since we've been back what's been the highlight, what's been the lowlight. I'm, I'm hearing from students about both, you know, so far. I've been checking in with them, regularly, as, as I know you have, as well. And Ryan has, as well. The other faculty.

>> Are there certain things that are coming out? I mean, you mentioned reverse culture shock.

>> Yeah.

>> For the students.

>> Yeah. One of the themes is, and this, I've experienced this before. Is that, you know, I want to tell the story but people don't really want to listen. Or.

>> What do you mean by that?

>> Students are excited to talk about their experience.

>> Yeah.

>> And but people only want to hear so much. Or people have strong opinions about it. Like.

>> Or people are expecting the, the sad story.

>> They're expecting the sad story.

>> Is what I'm finding.

>> Or they're experiencing, like, why did you go, why would you do that? Why would you go to Greece to help people, when people need help here? Those types of attitudes.

>> Oh, right. They're inserting opinions and. Yeah.

>> Yeah. So, they're faced with some of that stuff. And so, we'll definitely talk more about some of those, those issues and how, you know, how to approach those. And we did touch on that before we left. But we'll talk more at length about that. And, you know, how they're doing with integrating and, and digesting what, what they've learnt. And what kind of support system we're going to continue with, you know. Maybe, we get together for dinner in December and just have an informal gathering. And, you know, a lot of friendships were made over, over this trip, as well. And I love that, you know. People form kind of lifeline or lifelong connections after having an experience like this. And it's, it's amazing. So.

>> For seeing yourself and seeing others out of their comfort zone, I feel like is, there's no quicker way to make people feel connected.

>> Absolutely.

>> And I miss our group, too.

>> Yeah. I miss them. Yeah.

>> So much came out of that.

>> Yeah. And then, from the professional side, they'll be develop.

>> Yeah.

>> They'll be doing a, a presentation. A gallery presentation of some kind in the upcoming couple of months. Where people from the college community will be invited to see some of the pictures and hear some of the stories and.

>> Some of what was a stronghold for our students, and I think a big learning curve and a great lesson for them to learn, too, was how you portray the story

of others. Especially, in this situation. And so, that will be an interesting. It'll be interesting to see how they do it and how they come together to take what they've learnt and. And face the challenges of telling the story. And, kind of, some of the blowback and some of the diverse opinions that they'll have.

>> Yeah. And how they articulate that.

>> How they articulate it and how they, how they deal with the reverse culture shock on their own. So, now that this program or this, this, this trip has concluded, there's still a lot to be done with our students. But what, what is next for you in terms of how you want to continue doing trips abroad and integrating this into the coursework that you do?

>> Well, I think there's opportunities for, you know, any programs that have courses that focus on community development. I know in the CYC program there's a course where they actually have an assignment that they fund raise, which is fantastic. And I'd love to go talk with the folks in that program around does anyone want to do a project where we're doing a clothing drive for Ritsona?

>> Yeah.

>> And how can we continue to support Ritsona? I, I think that if there's a future trip next year, I would love to go back to this location. I think there's a lot of benefit to the continued relationship. And we know what the camp is lacking. We know what they need. And we can, kind of, focus in with the group on building that, you know, those donations around what's needed at the camp.

>> And, and accurately set expectations around what they can, what they may experience or what the role encompasses.

>> Absolutely. Yeah. And now that we've been, we can, we can definitely be more accurate around what to expect and, and what they'll see. So.

>> And there will always be 4-wheel drive moments, as you mentioned.

>> Yeah.

>> I really like Kelly's analogy around 4-wheel drive is just the state that everyone has to be in, in these situations. Because, you know, the, the ground could fall out from underneath you and you have to know how to navigate.

>> Or you can get stuck in the mud.

>> Or you can get stuck in the mud.

>> And if you get stuck in the mud, you know, you're not going to have the, the best experience.

>> First, you have to know that you're in the mud.

>> That, yes.

>> Then, you have to know how to get out.

>> How, how to navigate out of that. And part of that is being open and honest about what's happening and letting, you know, asking for help. And letting people help you and, and, you know. Not only do the students have to be 4-wheel drive, but the faculty and staff and chaperones have to be that and.

>> Yes.

>> I'm just grateful I was with a group of faculty and staff that were 4-wheel drive.

>> Yeah. They learnt real quick.

>> Yeah. Exactly.

>> What advice would you give to other faculty or staff that want to run programs like this?

>> My biggest advice would be to, I think one of the most important aspects is to build a team that, again, it starts, it starts with leadership. Right. That team has to be cohesive and, and with a strong level of trust, as well. Because even if it's just two, two people, that there has to be a level of trust there that, that. And cohesion that lends itself to modelling that for the students.

>> Yeah.

>> So, we can't expect from them what we're not doing ourselves. Right. So, that's, that's huge in itself. And, and that ability to, to be 4-wheel drive and navigate through some pretty interesting situations, new situations. Be adaptable. You can't be rigid. You can't be, kind of, expecting to function from, you know, a, a box. Like, you have.

>> Right.

>> To be able to step outside of that box and, and adapt to new situations. Because.

>> And go with your gut.

>> Go with your gut. Use common sense.

>> Yeah.

>> Be, be engaging. That's another piece is, you know. As a faculty member who's chaperoning these trips, it's really important to be engaged with the students. You don't have to be with them every waking moment. And I don't recommend that, either. They need time to be independent in a, in a new country. They need time to figure things out.

>> Yeah.

>> But engage with them. You know. Every day, how's it going? Like, really develop some genuine relationships. Really show you care about them. I link that back to therapeutic relationship building. And that's, that's a concept in, in child youth care. You know. Building therapeutic relationships. And that's,



essentially, what I've done with students through this process. And so, that when things go awry or when they get stuck in the mud, there's a level of trust that they can come to me and say, hey, I'm, I need help. And that did happen in Greece. You know. Student said, I need to talk.

>> Yeah.

>> You know. So, I was really proud of them for that.

>> Our students did an incredible job in uncertain territory. And I saw them step up every day and be mature and respectful and I was really happy to see their evolution, too. It was cool to see.

>> They were amazing, you know. And one of the, this is, this does not seem like a, a big deal. But to me it was a huge deal. One of the students who was working in the shop, she was at the front desk and when people would come up to the, the desk she would make sure she was pronouncing their names correctly.

>> Yeah.

>> And she would ask them their name and they would tell her. And then, she would say their name back. And she would say, "Was that correct?", before she would continue. And I just thought I am so proud of you, right now. And your mom would be so proud of you, right now. And I actually messaged her mom and told her. I said you should be really proud. And this is, seems like not a big deal. But to me those are the things that make all the difference.

>> Yeah. You care about getting it right. So, this being "The Extra Mile" podcast, I'm going to ask you who at Mohawk has gone the extra mile for you, that you want to recognize?

>> Well, the first person that comes to mind, for me, is Nancy Valinbrentin [assumed spelling]. And she's now retired. But she was a mentor to me when I first started teaching and she really helped me to shape who I was as a teacher. And I modelled a lot of her qualities in the classroom. And that, that really is why I am the way I am in the classroom. And it was all about relationships with her, you know. Help people to feel like they're not a number. That they're important, even if it's just smiling at them when they walk in the room. Like, she really did make a difference in my life. And she actually came on the first trip that I organized. And she was an amazing mentor for the students, as well, and just wonderful to work with. So, Nancy Valinbrentin, definitely. Along the way, there's been some, especially with this trip, there's been some tremendous support this time around. Especially, with the career ready fund.

>> Yep.

>> Lorraine McKellar, her husband, amazing with, with helping get things organized and taking some of the, the load off of me that I would normally experience. And she's been wonderful.

>> She has.

>> Keith Monrose has been extremely supportive. You know. Supporting you to come on the trip, like I'm just. I just.

>> Shout out to Keith. Thank you.

>> Shout out to Keith. Yeah. Ryan Iles.

>> I was just going to say.

>> My, our, our copilot.

>> Our trifecta.

>> Right.

>> Yeah.

>> He's, he's been amazing. I couldn't have, we couldn't have done it without him. I loved that Ryan, as a male chaperone, was able to be just as emotionally supportive and nurturing as. And there was other males on the trip. So, you know, I just, he was so engaged with the students every single day. And he never wavered. And he, he was truly amazing. And I'm, I'm just going to miss somebody and I don't like that. But there's just so many, there's so many great folks that have contributed. Seibert. You know, he's been supportive of all of this. And so, I'm just, I'm really grateful for, for everybody's trust.

>> It's nice to see that you've been carrying the torch for so long, too. And are now, now it's your time. You were ahead of your time and now.

>> Yeah.

>> It's time, now.

>> But I also want to pass the torch a bit.

>> Yeah.

>> So, I'm really. My vision is really to train other faculty.

>> Yep.

>> On how to do this and how to do it well, based on some of the, you know, what's gone. Like, the best practices as I would see them. But, also, some of the flops that have happened along the way. And I do, I do want to, kind of, show other faculty the ropes so that people can take this and, and run with it in their own programs.

>> Thank you, so much, for joining us and, and telling your story from such a genuine place. And being there for students and giving them a lifelong experience that they will never forget. So, thank you, Kelly.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you for listening to "The Extra Mile" podcast. And an extra shout out to my colleague Sean Coffee [assumed spelling] for recording my conversation. If you know someone who's going the extra mile for students at Mohawk

College, send an email to [extramile@mohawkcollege.ca](mailto:extramile@mohawkcollege.ca). And if you liked the show, give us a five-star rating. Thanks for listening.

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