

IOI-Canada is one of 25 Operational Centres of the International Ocean Institute, an International NGO which was founded in 1972 by the late Elisabeth Mann Borgeese. IOI's work is focused predominantly on education and training, research and analysis, organisation of conferences and meetings, institution-building and partnership, promotion and communication and fundraising.

Training is the main focus at IOI-Canada and an interdisciplinary programme has been offered at Dalhousie University each year since 1981. I was one of the 12 students that attended this year to the eight week training programme about Ocean Governance: Policy, Law and Management.

Since the very beginning the attention was great and it continued like that until the very end. I was picked up at the airport and transported to my room at Glengary (Edward 1253). Glengary is a very nice and pleasant place to stay.



The first person I met was Soulafa, a very polite person, always taking care of all of us. As the time passed we met several other people: Mr. Mike, Mr. David, Mr. Peter, Mr. Hugh, Ms. Madeleine (very special mother hen), Dr. Brown and so many other great persons that I can not name them all. To all of them, who tough us so much and made us feel like in home, thank you so much.

The course must cover 11 modules in 8 weeks, so no time to lose! At the next morning of my arrival classes began. Our classroom was at FASS Building. We had several classes in different places but FASS classroom was the most common one.



There we got the tradition of taking a picture of all of us and the lecturer. It was a fun tradition that made Soulafa crazy because we all wanted the photo and she had to deal with 12 different cameras!

On Friday 22nd, May we had the official Opening Ceremony at the Great Hall of the University Club. The place was beautiful and even the weather was awesome, we had 30 degrees that sunny day! After the Opening Ceremony we had a reception and lunch. From there on the course has officially started.



Classes started at 9:00 am every day and finished at 4:00 pm but most of the times the subject was so interesting and the interactions and discussion among students and teachers were so intense that we actually finished at 4:30. Between classes we had tours to different places of the University. My favourite place: Killam library. I spend a lot of time there learning bunch of things.

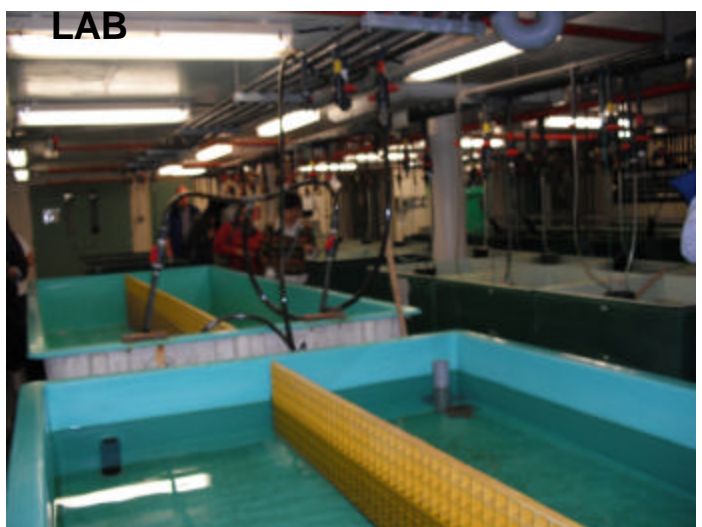
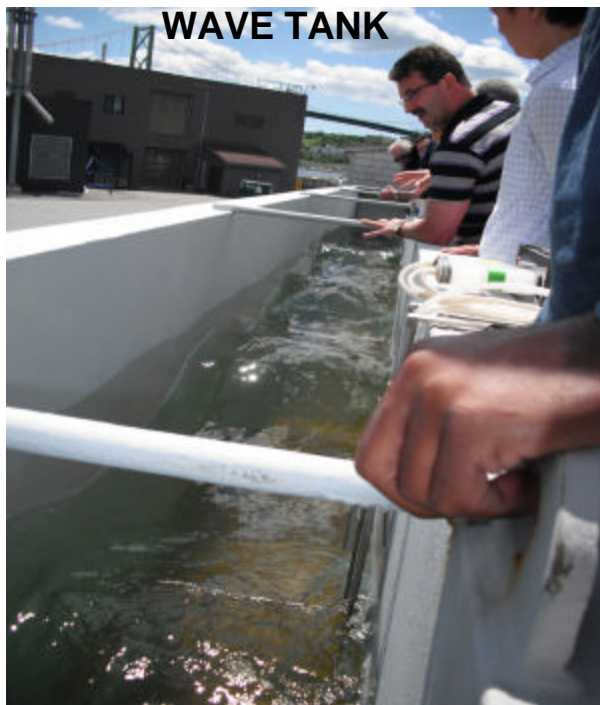
We were also introduced to the Simulation Exercise that we were supposed to conduct during the entire course. It looked interesting, fun and challenging.



Modules were diverse, complete, interesting, informative and sometimes fun. We learned a lot and personally, I took a lot of new good ideas that I can adapt and use in my daily work. At the end of each module, the module lider made a Wrap up session for garantying that we kepted the main ideas. Most of our weekend were free but most of the times Soulafa used to bring us some interesting activities for doing during that time so that we never get bored. These activies vary from Farmers Market to Book Sells or International Food Festival.



Our first Field Trip was to the Bedford Institute of Oceanography (BIO) on June 8th. We spend there all day. Several staff members gave us a mini tour through the facilities (big place) and they showed us the Gully and the Titanic Boardroom, the deep sea corals research and the COOGER Wave Tank for oil dispersion. We also went to an hour talk about our planet on the BIO Auditorium and visited the Lab (very impressive), with a lot of crabs, lobsters (even a blue one!) and juveniles. We had very interesting lectures about Coastal Management, Sharks, Multibeam Applications, Tidal Power and UNCLOS. WOW, that was a lot! After the closing remarks we depart to Glengary.



That very same night we had a very interesting lecture about Elisabeth Mann Borgese and the Arctic. At the next day, the lectures resume as usual at FASS. Some lectures like Kim's were quite interesting and challenging. I never thought that they were going to record me! Our amount of work was increasing with the simulation exercise, we received a lot of information daily and sometimes we even had lunch during work. But no matter how much work a student has, he will always find time to party at Glengary!



The biggest Field Trip that we had was to Annapolis Valley on June 13th – 15th. Our first stop was at Windsor to get maps and enjoy the view. The next spot was the Royal Grand Pre Centre and visited the Acadian Museum (very interesting and touching experience) and church. Next stop: Fort Anne. Finally we went to the Tidal Power Centre and saw lots of videos that explained the functioning of the system and got a good explanation from the specialist. The Tidal Power Centre has like 30m under the ground! And if you think that that was the end, think twice! We went to see ducks and swans to the marshes... and maybe even a beaver... or what just my imagination? We arrived to the hotel at 7pm and ready for sleeping.



At 7 am on the other day everybody went to have breakfast and went to Port Royal. WOW, that was incredible! The environment was extremely real! I wear all the clothes and took pictures everywhere! It was amazing! In Digby, we waited for the boat and went to see how lobsters are captured. We even tied some of them! We also saw the salmon farms with the fish jumping inside. Back to the shore at 5 pm. Right on time for having pizza and it was great because we were starving! Finally, we went to Stone Bear River. And that was quite experience. I truly enjoyed it completely, from the stories to the forest. Remarkable experience. We returned to the hotel tired and happy at night.



June 15th, the third and final day. We had breakfast at 7am and after that we went to see a bivalve factory. There, they boil the animals and take the shell off or just keep them raw... and cold. It is amazing the speed of the workers. We had lunch at a park and continued to Greenwood to see that military centre. We saw a very interesting picture and they even let us to get up in a real aircraft! That's a big WOW! We took pictures all over the place! We returned to Glengary.



The next weeks we had a lot of informative, interesting and complete modules. We also did several simulation exercises (very helpful) and got presentations from our own. We even had some classes at the Natural Museum.



Our next Field Trip was to the Aquaculture Centre at Truro and we were all impressed by the huge amount of fish that we found on a single tank. But that is not all. The water from the tanks is used for growing flowers! That is a good example of well used resources.



From this moment we could feel the pressure of the final simulation exercise. We were all studying a lot and having meetings and negotiations all over the places! Another Field Trip was to Halifax Harbour. They showed us how the Port works, the impressive ring of communication and the team work.



The next week we had IMCE exercise and our last Field Trip was to the Oil Response Centre (quite impressive). After that we hardly had time for doing nothing but the final modules and the simulation exercise. Oh! We also saw the "waves of change" from Dr. Brown (I cannot wait to join them).



And then... the simulation exercise, the presentations, the Round Table, the Panel, the questions, the discussions. No time to breath! WOW that was as intense as wonderful!



Finally, the Closing ceremony at the Great Hall. As beautiful as the Opening one, with our diplomas and with all our host families there. We thanked everyone and specially the IOI mafia. They all made great jobs! After that we found strength for going to the tall ships event and at the other day we finished the course with a feedback session and Closing remarks. We thanked everyone once again. This course was a marvellous experience... and we were ready to go home!



THANK YOU VERY MUCH OCEAN MAFIA!

