

UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES
FACULTAD DE HUMANIDADES Y EDUCACIÓN
ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS MODERNOS

DESCUBRIENDO LA DIVERSIDAD CULTURAL DURANTE MI PASANTIA
EN EL CENTRO CULTURAL SIMÓN BOLÍVAR EN
MONTREAL – CANADÁ

SULBEY PIÑATE TORRES

MÉRIDA, MAYO 2010

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DISCOVERING CULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGHOUT MY INTERNSHIP
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Informe final de Pasantías presentado por la Br. Sulbey Piñate Torres como requisito parcial para optar al título de Licenciada en Idiomas Modernos.

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Título de informe: “Discovering Cultural Diversity Throughout my Internship at the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar in Montreal-Canada”

Identificación de la institución sede:

- Organismo: Consulado General de la Republica Bolivariana de Venezuela en Montreal-Canadá.
- Departamento o unidad: Sección Cultural: “Centro Cultural Simón Bolívar”
- Dirección: 394 Maisonneuve ouest, Montréal, Québec.

Nombre y apellido del responsable institucional: Elio Vitriago Abreu

Cargo: Cónsul General de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela en Montreal

Duración de las pasantías:

- Fecha de inicio: 14 de septiembre del 2009
- Fecha de culminación: 18 de diciembre de 2010

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INTRODUCTION

As a requirement to complete the study plan of the major in Modern Languages, it is essential to do an internship. It is a practice that allows students the opportunity to implement the knowledge and understanding acquired at the University in a genuine work place. The areas and domains in which languages could be applied are as wide and diverse as the different alternatives and choices that students have to do the internship, whether abroad or within our borders. In my case, I had the favorable chance to do the internship abroad, more specifically in Montreal, Canada. This city provided me the setting to approach people in English as well as in French, and by this, I could ameliorate my skills in those two languages that I learnt at the University. Most importantly, in the city of Montreal, I learnt the complexity and richness of a culturally diverse society. For this reason, I can affirm that the experience of doing the internship abroad is of incalculable value and worth.

The institution that received me as an intern was The Cultural Center Simón Bolívar (CCSB). It is the cultural section of the Consulate General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Montreal. Evidently, it is a governmental institution dependent on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela. The main goal of the CCSB is the intercultural dialogue and exchange through cultural activities, first of all among the vast Latin American community that resides in that city, and then, between the formerly mentioned community and the society of Montreal. The Cultural Center offers every day a variety of cultural events in three languages:

Spanish, French, and English. This fact gave me an additional benefit of having the chance to become more proficient in the languages that I had already studied.

At the moment that I was accepted to be an intern in this institution, I undoubtedly agreed to go to Canada and take advantage of this opportunity. There are two main reasons for having done my internship at the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar. First, it is an International Organization, and I immediately saw an opportunity to have a first hand experience with the career that I would like to pursue in a near future. Second, the CCSB is located in Montreal, an important and cosmopolitan center of the world, and most importantly, a bilingual city.

At the CCSB I worked as a General Assistant, and my main functions were basically administrative and related to the organizations of many different cultural events. The tasks that I performed made me aware of all the implications of the planning of activities, especially those of great importance and magnitude. Additionally, I experienced the pressure of having a lot of responsibilities, as well as the gratification of having accomplished the organizational goals.

Throughout this report, I will be presenting in detail all the features of my internship experience. This means that I will present the job that I carried out at the CCSB, combined with my impressions of the Montreal society. In order to do this, I will divide this report in five parts. First, I will describe the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar, a brief history of its creation, its mission and vision, and the staff that works there. Additionally, I will also explain most of the activities carried out at the CCSB. Second, I will give a rundown of the activities that I was in charge of developing

during my internship. Third, I will put into words my retrospective impressions of the internship experience, its positive and negative aspects from my personal point of view as from the view of the Modern Languages students in general. I will also reflect on the implications of working at an institution of the nature of the CCSB, and the features that involve trying to practice language skills in a bilingual society. Fourth, I will analyze some aspects that have influenced the arrival of immigrants to Montreal, and how this society is leaving behind their own social and ethnic resentments, and it is taking a step forward in the recognition and practice of cultural diversity. Finally, I will give my conclusions and recommendations to the School of Modern Languages, The Cultural Center Simón Bolívar and to the students who are near to pursue their internship. Hopefully, these recommendations will be of assistance for the improvement, and subsequently the success of the internship program of Modern Languages.

PROFILE OF THE HOST INSTITUTION

The Cultural Center Simón Bolívar (CCSB) is the cultural section of the Consulate General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Montreal – Canada. This Cultural Center was created on July 5th 2007 during the commemoration of Venezuela's Independence Day. It is important to emphasize that its creation was only possible because of the efforts of the Consul General Mr. Elio Vitriago, who found the human capital and material resources to put together this institution. The main goal of the CCSB is the encouragement and fortification of the cultural exchange of the Latin American community in Montreal.

Even though the Cultural Center is a part of the Consulate of Venezuela, they function in different headquarters. This is because the Cultural Center is strategically located near by the “Place-des-arts”, which is considered the Cultural heart of the city of Montreal. As a matter of fact, this is where the most important cultural activities take place, such as “The Montreal International Jazz Festival.” Under those circumstances; the Cultural Center has a privileged setting that has contributed to its consolidation as an important reference point among the cultural institutions of the city.

The infrastructure is composed of a big room used for multiple purposes, an office, and a reception area. The work method is based on projects that can be submitted by any person, association or legal entity through the web site of the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar. After sending the request, people must wait until the project is evaluated by the director of the Center before having a definitive answer

regarding the approval or rejection of it. In the case of approval of the project, the Cultural Center arranges the date in the calendar that is published with anticipation on the web site, it provides the sound, lighting and video equipment, and it covers the costs of preparation, invitations to the event, food and drink, when applicable.

During the whole year, there are activities taking place at the Cultural Center, for instance, during the year 2009, the CCSB carried out 218 activities. These activities went from weekly shows of Latin American movies, exhibitions of plastic arts, courses of “cuatro”, Spanish courses, concerts, tributes, dance presentations and workshops, poetry readings, cinema courses, literature conferences, and movie discussions.

Internal Organization

Since the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar is the cultural section of the Consulate General of Venezuela in Montreal, it depends administratively from it. Separately, the CCSB counts with two employees: Mr. Luis Martinez Peraza, my direct boss, who is the Cultural Attaché and Vice-Consul of the Consulate General, and his assistant and receptionist Mrs. Veronica Narvaez Agudo. The place that I occupied was the General Assistant of the Cultural Center.

As previously mentioned, the CCSB organizes diverse activities for the enjoyment and entertainment of the Montreal community in general and the Spanish speaking community. Some of these activities are:

Weekly exhibitions of Latin American movies: Every Wednesday, the CCSB exhibits a Latin American film in Spanish with subtitles in English or French. Movies

from all countries are selected alternately, without giving any preference to a country in particular. In that way, the participation of all Latin American films is guaranteed. In some occasions, there is a short presentation and overview of the film made by a member of the crew of the film, such as: the photography director, or the producer. Additionally, every two Tuesdays the CCSB also shows Italian mafia movies, this activity is organized by the Consulate General of Italy in Montreal, and the Cultural Center kindly offers them the room and the tools that are necessary for that activity.

Dance presentations and concerts: Occasionally, the CCSB also presents dance shows. There are workshops to instruct the audience about the history and techniques of traditional Latin American dances. As well as dance performances and concerts of talented Latin American artists that live in Montreal, and guest artists from other places.

Vernissages: Every two or three weeks, the CCSB presents a new exhibition of a Latin American plastic artist. And every time one of these exhibitions is inaugurated, there is a reception in which the artist can interact with the audience, explain his or her work, and it is also an opportunity for the Latin American community to share a special moment that generally includes a toast, wine, food and music. Vernissages at the CCSB have become very popular and crowded.

Cinema course: it takes place every Thursday. The course is a mixture of theory, technology and history of the cinema, which has as aim to summon the participants for the creation of a cinematographic collective project to produce their own short movies. The main goal of the course is the acquisition of the tools,

theoretical and technical knowledge of production and cinematographic creation. In addition, this knowledge is supported by practical exercises of video projection, analysis and reflection of movies. This allows students to observe in a critical way the cinematographic art and its process of creation, conceptualization and production, by means of the use of a polished and expressive language. The instructor is Diego Arismendi, an awarded Mexican movie maker, producer and director of photography. The classes are in Spanish, for this reason, students are only Latin American. However, because of its success, it is being planned to be taught in French and English to be offered to the Canadian public as well.

Publication of the newspaper “Le Bolivarien”: Another important activity of the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar is the diffusion of information of the Venezuelan political and social situation, as well as cultural information, and the activities to come at the CCSB. For this reason, it publishes a journal every two months called “Le Bolivarien.” It presents Venezuelan news in French and the calendar of activities of the CCSB, to keep the Montreal’s population, that is mostly French speaking, informed.

In addition to all these activities, the Cultural Center is also involved in other activities outside its headquarters. For instance, during November, The School of Languages of The University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM) organized the “Hispanic Week,” and the CCSB was asked to participate in this activity. Its main purpose was to encourage cultural exchange with the students, to give political and

touristic information about Venezuela and to give the opportunity to Canadian students to practice skills in Spanish.

The most important activity of the year in which the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar participated was the Concert of the Symphonic Youth Orchestra of Montreal called “Fiesta Musical Iberoamericana”. This concert took months of preparation and it was organized in collaboration with thirteen countries that have their respective Consulates in Montreal: Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Spain, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. It is important to mention that the initiator of the whole idea of this concert was the Consul General of Venezuela Mr. Elio Vitriago, who made possible the collaboration of the Youth Orchestra, the Consulates and the University of Montreal, where the Concert was held. The orchestra interpreted one or two traditional musical pieces from each country under the direction of the famous Conductor Louis Lavigneur.

The Cultural Center played an important role in the organization of this concert, finding the musical scores of the pieces, sending invitations to the honor guests, and in the creation of posters, flyers and most importantly, the program of the concert that included the list of musical pieces for each country and the biography of the authors of each song.

It is remarkable to mention that all the activities at the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar are free; it is not allowed under any circumstance to receive any payment or to buy or sale anything. This fact has motivated the voluntary incorporation of artists and workers of the cultural area that make possible the multiplication of activities

during the year. In addition, the teachers in charge of the Spanish classes, the “cuatro” lessons and the cinema course do not get any payment from the CCSB, they work voluntarily as instructors for the Latin American audience, as well as the Canadian people who are interested in taking the courses.

Although it has not been too long since its creation, the CCSB counts already with an important audience, and it receives many requests for activities of people and organizations from the Latin American community in Montreal, but also from other communities as the Chinese, Italian, Iranian, Canadian, among others. This is why the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar is considered the house of the Latin American culture in Montreal.

NATURE OF THE INTERNSHIP

Although the period of time of my internship at the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar was not too long, I performed very diverse and heterogeneous activities. They can be simply summarized as organizing events and administrative work in general, however, I would like to enumerate and explain widely the most important duties that I carried out during my internship.

Organizing a quantitative report of activities: At the beginning of a new year, the Consulate has to write a detailed report describing all the activities carried out during the previous year. This report must be sent to the Ministry of Popular Power for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, and one of its purposes is to justify the budget spent by the Consulate during the year. My assignment was to make a very complete study of every single activity of the Cultural Center, putting on paper a description of the activity, date and time, the average attendance of the audience, remarkable achievements and the aspects that could be improved. I had to organize this report by months, and additionally, I had to add a quantitative report counting the amount of activities by categories (concerts, classes or conferences). Finally, I had to count the total amount of activities of the year that was two hundred and eighteen activities. This task was very important to evaluate the annual performance, and it also works as a self evaluation for the CCSB, because it expresses the achievements and failures of the year. Since I was not present during the entire year, I had to interview the Consulate staff that was present in those activities to have information on the activities performed.

Collecting a database: Every time that there is an activity, the CCSB has to send out invitations to different political, social, academic and cultural organizations. This is a way of getting more involved with the Montreal society, and to let more people know about the work that the Cultural Center accomplishes. Before I arrived, this process was a bit unorganized, and the amount of invitations sent out was too limited. For this reason, one of my main tasks during the internship was to make a database that included a list of institutions and organizations of the city of Montreal, organized by categories and including phone numbers, e-mails and postal addresses. Some of these categories were: music, dance and theatre schools, whether public or private; faculties of arts and their respective deans or directors, libraries, journalists and media, consulates, other cultural centers, museums, art galleries and musicians. My task was to make these lists, and to find all the contact information of these people and organizations, retrieving the information from the Internet, and in most cases calling one by one to confirm the information. After compiling all this information, I had to organize it on a computer and to print it. At present, anytime the CCSB needs to send invitations for an event, they just have to copy the addresses from the database that I created, depending on the category of the event.

Contacting the advertising company: For the most important events, the CCSB makes a small advertisement campaign to inform the public. For this purpose, I had to contact a graphic designer and explain to her how the Cultural Center wanted the posters, flyers and three-page leaflets. After that, she sent me the preliminary version that had to be examined by the director of the CCSB. In case of being

approved, I had to send the final version to a printing company that finally delivered the printed material to the CCSB. In addition, I had to send a digital version of the posters to several web pages that announce on-line cultural events, in order to have the events publicized through that media as well.

Organizing the “Fiesta Musical Iberoamericana”: I also made my contribution in the organization process of the concert of the Symphonic Youth Orchestra of Montreal. For this purpose, I had to translate the biographies of the authors of the four musical pieces of Venezuela and Bolivia, I had to organize alphabetically the countries, and add information about them (capital, population, area and location). All this information was printed in the written program of the concert. I also prepared a video that showed the flags and names of all the thirteen countries that participated in the concert. This video was shown during the whole concert in a big screen behind the musicians. On top of that, the night of the concert, I had to receive the guests of honor, collect their invitations, check them on a list, and place them on their seats. This list of guests of honor included Ambassadors, Consuls, members of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and even the Minister of Immigration of Quebec.

Teaching Spanish classes: Since there were too many people interested in Spanish classes, the Cultural Center decided to open another course for beginners. Although I was not supposed to work as a teacher, I voluntarily offered myself to teach Spanish lessons. Fortunately, I had certain preparation because I had previously taken the course “Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language” at the University of Los

Andes. My classes were every Wednesday from 12:00pm to 2:00pm. My students were Canadian people of an average age of 45 to 50 years old. The classes were based on a book called “Pensar y Aprender,” and they consisted on following the book exercises. However, I also prepared more amusing activities as karaoke, Spanish poetry readings and speeches. At the end of the course, students had a written and oral test and they all passed it.

Coordinating the participation of Venezuela in the Hispanic Week at the UQAM: The school of languages of the University of Quebec in Montreal UQAM (for its acronym in French) organized the “Hispanic week,” it consisted on several delegations of Spanish speaking countries in charge of putting together stands or kiosks in the university in order to give information to the students about their respective countries. I was in charge of the Venezuelan stand, and for five days I stayed at the UQAM, where I had the opportunity to meet a lot of students and teachers who approached me to talk about Venezuelan politics, social affairs, culture and tourism. It was an excuse for them to practice and improve their conversational skills in Spanish, as well as it was for me to practice my English and French.

Writing administrative, invitation and gratitude letters: Occasionally, I had to write letters in Spanish, English and French. For instance, when the Cultural Center invites artists from Venezuela, they send a letter of invitation, that is mandatory to request a visa at the Canadian Embassy, or when the Cultural Center receives collaboration from an institution or organization, they generally send a letter

expressing the gratitude of the CCSB. Usually there are preestablished formats for these letters, under those circumstances it was not a difficult task to carry out.

Evaluating and answering the requests of activities: I was involved in the several stages of the process of developing activities at the Cultural Center. First, when a request for an activity was received through the web site, I had to research who or what organizations had sent the request, their mission, the purpose of the activity, and I had to make sure that it was a non-profit activity. In sum, it was important to know if the activity fulfilled the requirements, and followed the rules of the Cultural Center. After that, I had to report to the Director Mr. Luis Martinez Peraza the information gathered about the request. If he decided to carry out the activity, I had to arrange an appointment with the person, group or organization to discuss the project. At that point, the process of preparation of the activity began, in which my tasks were to make and send out invitations, to have the audiovisual equipment all set, to call the cleaning company to have area ready, and to make sure that the drinks and food (only in some cases) were delivered in time.

REFLECTION ESSAY

As a Modern Languages student, I think that it is very hard for us to be placed in a specific working position; we are not prepared to perform a concrete role at an enterprise or organization. For this reason, it was natural, at least in my case, that when I arrived to my host institution to carry out the internship, I felt insecure and unprepared to perform the tasks assigned. In several occasions, I have heard suggestions from students to the school of Modern Languages to modify or to add more subjects to the professional option, in order to make the profile of the students more suitable for working positions. However, I do not completely agree with this idea. I think that it is the student's responsibility to take extracurricular activities, depending on personal preferences, to complement the knowledge acquired at the university to be prepared for the internship. In retrospective, I believe that I did not take the initiative to develop skills in a specific area, subsequently, I had to learn at the same time that I was carrying out the internship, which made it harder for me to accomplish the numerous tasks that I was expected to do. In addition, there were not too many chances to put into practice my language skills at the Consulate. However, I had the invaluable opportunity to learn the functioning of an international organization representing Venezuela abroad, and I was able to interact with a lot of people from the political and cultural areas of Montreal.

When I arrived to Montreal, I was received by the Consul General Mr. Elio Vitriago, who very kindly explained to me, in general terms, what my job would be about. The following day I started my internship, and I was assigned immediately to

collaborate with the organization of the “Fiesta Musical Iberoamericana.” I was asked to translate information from Spanish to French, to make phone calls to other Consulates and at the same time, to start putting together the database of the Cultural Center. Although it was very gratifying for me to start by having a lot of responsibilities, I felt pressured to demonstrate my efficiency and productivity in my workplace. On the one hand, being a Modern Language student who is about to get a diploma, I did not want to admit that I was not prepared to make high quality translations, for that reason, I pushed myself to do it as good as possible, expecting to have satisfactory results for the institution. On the other hand, I did not know how to approach the organization of an event or not even how to make an official phone call to ask for information. As the days went by, I was assigned to carry out more diverse tasks and activities, and as for most of them, I felt capable of doing it but completely unprepared. It seemed to me that I had to learn on the spot, it means that I had to gain an understanding on how to carry out different activities while actually performing them. It was always well accepted to gain new knowledge and experience, but I felt a lot of pressure and at times frustration. From my point of view, the two actors involved in this situation were not acting properly. First, the host institution was assigning me too many tasks that I was not prepared to do, probably because of the lack of staff in the institution. Second, I could have just expressed that I was not comfortable with the amount or the demand of the job; however I wanted to push myself to fulfill their expectations and my own. Naturally, I did not want to feel disappointed with my performance, I believe that these inconvenients are common in

any work environment, and that they were a product of my lack of experience. Consequently, I learned that they could be easily solved by creating good communication at work and expressing my thoughts and feelings.

Beyond the personal concerns that I could have had during my internship, I would like to go further on a major issue: the difficulties of Modern Language students for not having much training to work in a particular area. The major in Modern Languages of the University of Los Andes includes phonetics, linguistics, literature, culture, and reading and writing courses in Spanish and in two foreign languages of the student's choice, whether English, French, Italian or German. Additionally, the major offers a professional option consisting of five subjects in areas such as: International Organizations, Translation, Linguistic and literary investigation or a third language. In my case, I decided to take as my professional option "International Organizations." Through this option I had the opportunity to know the main features and functions of public and private International Organizations such as: The United Nations, the Organization of American States, many Non-governmental Organizations, Multinational Corporations, and some regional integration organizations such UNASUR and MERCOSUR. Personally, I feel glad of having received all this information and in general terms, this professional option fulfilled my expectations. Through this brief summary of Modern Language studies, I wanted to demonstrate why, in my opinion, in spite of being a very complete and well-balanced study plan; it does not prepare students to actually perform a particular and determined job.

I have heard many students complaining about this fact, however, very few has been done to change this. The natural solution that comes to the spotlight and the main focus is to change the study plan to make it more suitable to the profile of International Organizations worker. But from my point of view, this focus is misguided because of two main reasons. First, we decided to follow our studies in the humanities area, for that reason, we take several literature courses and an introduction to arts or philosophy, if these courses are removed from the study plan to add administration or political science courses, I believe that our major would lose its essence and fundamental part of being in the area of humanities. I think that we need to appreciate and preserve the nature of our major, specially the literature courses that definitely help us to have a more comprehensive approach to arts and life in general. In my opinion, if a student needs to have more preparation in the area of politics or international relations, he or she has the option of studying at the School of Political Sciences through the different modalities that the University of Los Andes has to offer.

Second, I think that we should take the initiative as student to improve and expand our knowledge in the area that we prefer, it is our responsibility to take extracurricular activities, courses, conferences, workshops, and all that we consider necessary to incorporate to our Modern Language studies the skills, capacities, abilities, and the experience that we need to carry out successfully our internship, and subsequently to pursue a defined working position. For instance, the University of Los Andes offers a program in which students could take any courses that they wish

from any other major to complement their studies, they could be political sciences, accounting, administration, or why not, law or computing. Also, our Faculty of Humanities and Education also provides us with short workshops on oratory, writing administrative texts and teaching Spanish as a second language. To add more, there are plenty public and private institutes in the city of Merida where to apply for an extra tuition in order to be prepared for the working experience at an International Organization or any other type of organization. My point of view is that students should voluntarily try to create themselves a profile instead of waiting for the School of Modern Languages to change the study plan and solve the issue of the lack of preparation to perform the internship or to work at an International Organization.

Regarding the internships of students of Modern Languages in International Organizations (IOs), there is another issue that comes to the table. What do we expect or what is our assumption about the job that we can perform at an IO? And do those expectations match the reality of habitual work? From my personal experience, I may say that before I started my internship, it was not clear for me what my functions would be; in fact, I ignored the duties and activities of a Consulate General. I supposed that it was related to diplomatic events and attending the needs of the Venezuelan community in Montreal, such as passports and right of residence. Nevertheless, I found out that it is more than that. In general terms, the work that I performed at the Cultural Center was based on administrative work, organization of events and public relations. It was not related at all to politics, and not much to diplomacy; instead most of the times the job was bureaucratic monotonous work. I

am definitely not saying that it is a negative aspect; my point is that it is important to have a general idea of what the job is about in order to be prepared for it and to approach it in a correct way.

In addition to the former idea, carrying out an internship at a governmental international organization that takes part of the diplomatic mission of Venezuela, whether an embassy, a consulate or a delegation representing Venezuela abroad could be very beneficial to gain experience in the functioning of international organizations, however, it is not necessarily the best opportunity to improve language skills. In the Consulate General of Venezuela in Montreal, and subsequently at the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar, all the staff is Venezuelan, this means that during the daily work the language used at all times was Spanish. This is reinforced by the fact that most of the activities carried out at the CCSB are developed in Spanish for a Spanish speaking audience.

Despite that, there were a few opportunities for language improvement at work; though they were limited to make phone calls to people or institutions in Montreal or delivering information through electronic mail. Additionally, being most Montreal citizens and residents bilingual, I had the advantage to practice both languages, French and English, outside of the workplace. I can now affirm that I have a good level of oral and written English, and that I improved considerably in my French oral production. I believe that it did not matter if at the Cultural Center I could not practice my language skills constantly, because actually the fact of living in a bilingual city as Montreal offers the perfect framework to practice French as well as

English on a regular basis. And since I had the chance to socialize with a lot of Montrealers outside the host institution, now I can perceive an important improvement in both languages. My English has improved both in the oral and written production; meanwhile my French speaking skills have improved more than my writing skills.

Another implication of working at a Consulate, representing and defending the interests and beliefs of the Venezuelan state abroad is that I had to leave aside my personal, political and social beliefs. Working at a Consulate also means that you have to adapt to governmental policies and decisions whether you agree or not. I bring this matter to the table because I think that it is relevant to let other Modern Language students know that if they want to do their internship at a Venezuelan Diplomatic mission, although they may not agree with Venezuelan governmental policies, they should simply remain impartial.

To add more, we are living in a competitive world where it is important to continue studying. Postgraduate studies are becoming increasingly in demand. But for Modern Language graduates it is essential, if not mandatory, to keep on studying and specializing. There are two main reasons for this. First, as described previously, the profile of the professional in Modern Languages is not easily suitable in many organizations or enterprises. Second, as competition increases, professionals in other different areas also learn languages, mainly English, as a supplementary study. These people could work as a link between two languages also applying their knowledge in engineering, medicine, architecture or any other area. In this same order of ideas,

before the beginning of my internship I had already taken into account this fact, however, I was disoriented in terms of what area I was going to pursue as a complementary study. For this reason, I consider that the most profitable benefit that I could get from my internship was that it made it clear for me which path I could pursue in a professional area. Consequently, I will be starting next year a “Master in International Relations” at the University of Buenos Aires – Argentina with specialization in MERCOSUR and UNASUR. I think that this area is going to have a lot of demand in a near future, mainly because of the increasing creation of new organizations of regional cooperation in Latin America. Then, I would like to take the “Master in Translation and Interpretation English – Spanish” in the same university, because it is a concrete role that can be required in many organizations, and it is related to my major in the University of Los Andes. To sum up, the internship helped me to clarify in which field I see myself working in the future, and which studies I am going to take in order to complement my academic preparation.

After finishing my internship, I feel satisfied of having learned all the details of the process of organizing events, teaching Spanish, a bit of public relations by managing demands and requests of people or organizations through letters, electronic mail, telephone or personally. I could say that my internship was an intensive training – in terms of time – in diplomatic and cultural activities with its highs and lows that finally turned out to be a fructiferous experience for me in the personal and professional spheres.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN MONTREAL

After the French and British colonization processes, in the province of Quebec but most specifically in the city of Montreal, there were a lot of confrontation between the French and the English speaking population. It is so, that Montreal was divided through a main avenue that separated both communities. However, most recently Montreal society has become so multicultural, that most of the confrontation and geographical separation has disappeared, and it has lead to the formation of a recently developed culturally diverse city. Beyond the previous tensions between Anglophones and Francophones, contemporary Montreal is home to a diverse collection of cultures and peoples who generally live together harmoniously.

It is true that Globalization has allowed the high movements and flow of people mostly to the great commercial and cultural centers of the world. And it was evident for me when I arrived to Montreal that this island had not escaped from this process. From the very first day that I was there, I observed that people on the streets had different features and came from diverse cultural and ethnic origins.

Montreal Culture and the Influence of Immigrants in their Society

The English assimilation of the province of Quebec marked the beginning of a series of concerns of the French-Canadian population to conserve their culture and language. In present times, many of them have not completely reached a good understanding with the rest of English-speaking Canada. They do not agree with the continuance of Canada in the Commonwealth, as a matter of fact, during the period of my internship, Prince Charles went to Montreal for a state visit, and people were

agitated and went out to the streets to protest with slogans such as: “à bas la monarchie” (down with the monarchie). It is undeniable that there is still certain resentment between anglophones and francophones in Montreal. However, in my opinion, the concern about the conservation of the French-Canadian culture is nowadays more notable in Quebec City than in Montreal. For me, the explanation of this phenomenon is simple: immigrants could have caused an effect of neutralization, and the rate of foreign immigration in Montreal is much higher than in Quebec City (Government of Quebec, 2006). At least the first impression that I had from my visit to Quebec City was that genetically all people were white Caucasians. In contrast, in Montreal, I noticed the exact opposite: races and ethnic groups were so many and various from first and second generations of immigrants, that it was hard to determine who is completely Canadian or Montrealer, meaning, without any foreign origin or ascendance. To sum up, Montreal has been able to get rid of the strong attachment to their culture, in comparison to other French-Canadian regions, because of the strong influence of immigration in their society, which at the same time has been very open to receive this influence. This has brought as a consequence that Montreal society has become very complex and culturally diversified.

During the past years, the rates of immigration in Montreal have raised considerably. This is not a surprise taking into account that we have been going through a process of globalization. However, there are several other aspects that have encouraged immigration because of personal, professional, academic, economic or social reasons to Montreal. From my point of view, some of these aspects include:

The Quality of life and The Prosperous Economy

Definitely, the high standard of living has attracted many immigrants to Montreal. This city is one of the most important and cosmopolitan cities in North America and the second most populated and economically important city of Canada (McLean, 2010). The quality of life of its inhabitants is quite superior to many other important cities. The high income per capita and the developed economy allows Montreal to have efficient public services: the transport system, the free health care, the modern infrastructure and the high quality education. The island is an important center of commerce and business. The range of areas in which Montreal's economy is involved goes from airspace, electronic goods, engineering, pharmaceuticals and telecommunications, to textile and apparel manufacturing, tobacco, transportation, and film making, among others. After mentioning these facts, it is easy to deduce why this city receives thousands of immigrant every year from many places of the world, generally people looking for better opportunities in life, trying to get jobs in the vast amount of industries and commerce of Montreal and to get a more decent salary than in their countries of origin. The arrival of immigrant has resulted in the growth of ethnic groups of many different origins; Italian, Irish, English, Scottish, Arabs, Jewish, Haitian, Chinese, German, Latin American, African and more, that converge in Montreal, all of them taking an important part of the society.

The Quality of post-secondary education

The city is known for its University life, Montreal is the city with the highest concentration of University students in North America, followed by Boston. It is not rare to see groups of students everywhere, in the subway, the buses and all the cafes, especially the downtown. There are six important universities in Montreal, one of them is Mc Gill University, it is anglophone and it is one of the most important ones in North America. There is another anglophone university called Concordia. Additionally, “L’Université de Montréal,” “L’Université de Québec a Montréal,” “L’Université Sherbrooke” and “L’Université Laval” are the francophone universities. The quality of education in Montreal attracts hundreds of students from many parts of the world who go there to pursue their education. In fact, working at the Consulate of Venezuela, I had the opportunity to meet many Venezuelan students in that situation.

Montreal as a Touristic Destination

The Cultural life of Montreal is incredibly rich, especially during the summer, when the downtown becomes the center of many widely recognized festivals, as “The Just for Laughs Festival,” “The Montreal International Jazz Festival,” “The Montreal World Film Festival.” Montreal is also home of one of the most important cultural enterprises, which is “Le Cirque du Soleil.” Apart from that, the architecture from the colonial period in Montreal is very renowned; the city was nicknamed “The City of the Hundred Bell Towers.” There are beautiful Roman-Catholic churches and basilicas everywhere you look, built mainly because of the French influence. The

festivals, the architecture and cultural activities attract millions of tourists every year. To be more precise, in 2005, Montreal received 14 million visitors, mostly from The United States, Eastern Europe and Japan. (Government of Quebec, 2006).

International Organizations

In Montreal, there are headquarters of many International Organizations, such as “The Canadian Space Agency,” “The International Civil Aviation Organization” (ICAO), “The World Anti-Doping Agency,” “The International Air Transport Organization,” and “The International Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce,” among others. Evidently, these organizations bring a lot of people from many nationalities. For instance, The ICAO has at least two people representing the each of the 192 member states of the United Nations. This translates into many foreigners and their families living in Montreal due to their diplomatic jobs in representation of their states. The International Organizations have also promoted immigration to Montreal, and this has definitely caused certain effects in the culture of the city.

Whether some people may like it, and some others do not, cultures change and they have changed due to different aspects along history. Because of globalization, nowadays it becomes necessary to understand culture as a dynamic structure. It is simply not coherent to see Culture as a static and fixed set of rules that determine peoples’ behavior and traditions. The truth is that cultures have changed and evolved through time as well as humanity. In the present time, this evolution has been highly influenced by globalization. Due to technology and advances in communication, people are more in touch with different

cultures from which some aspects may be adopted and some others rejected, in any case, the influence of some cultures over others is undeniable. It could be said that we are going through a process of cultural exchange product of globalization. Some people believe that there is no such thing as exchange; instead, we are in the presence of new form of cultural imperialism, that is, the domination of the culture of the United States through their vast media power and cultural industries over the others. The formation of a “Global Culture”, meaning an elitist, consumerist, English speaking culture being adopted in some degree by the rest of the world. (UER, 2005). However, from my point of view, this argument is quite simplistic. First, it underestimates the receptors of this global culture. Cultures can assimilate it in many different ways, they could accept it and adopt it without any complains, they can completely reject it and actually become more radical in their traditions in order to confront it, as it the case of many Middle Eastern countries. Or most commonly, they can take some features and integrate them to their own culture, creating a mixture or a homogenization of cultures. Second, this argument of the U.S. imposing a global culture on others ignores that one of the main features of globalization is the flow of people moving for different reasons across the world. People who immigrate or just visit a country bring with them a series of features of their own culture, and at some point they are going to cause an influence in the culture of the country that receives them, this can lead to a mixture of cultures or the creation of subcultures. Even the United States does not escape from this. The influence of immigrant in that country in the food, arts, traditions, and others, can not be denied. A clear example could be the

“chicanos”, people from Mexican origins – but half North American - living in the United States with their own traditions and having an influence in that society. Another example could be the acceptance and popularity of Italian food in that country’s diet on a regular basis. Considering this, I would like to make clear that I am not denying the fact that humanity is going through a globalization of culture. My point is that, this process should not be seen only as a domination of U.S. culture over the others. Instead, it should be approached as a phenomenon in which multiple cultures are evolving and developing under the influence of others in a global context.

Clearly, this phenomenon is more evident in developed countries, mainly because they receive more immigrants every year and the cultural exchange is lived in greater dimensions. This is the case of Canada, however, I am going to be more specific and refer exclusively to the case of the city of Montreal. It took me by surprise the convergence of so many different cultures in this city. Since the moment I arrived, I realized that it was a multicultural city, and all the reasons mentioned formerly keep encouraging the arrival of immigrants and visitors that join that culture. Even though it may sound redundant, after spending more time in Montreal, I realized that this society, even beyond being multicultural, has reached a higher level called cultural diversity.

On the one hand, multiculturalism refers to the co-existence or convergence of different cultures in the same geographical borders. In this case, I would take the risk of saying that this happens in every single country of the planet. Many cultures live in the same country or city, however, this does not mean that they are integrated or that

they respect and appreciate each other. In fact, there are extreme cases, in which two or more cultures are rivals and fight socially, politically or militarily with each other over ethnic, religious, racial and other issues in the same country. On the other hand, cultural diversity is a wider and more complex concept. It involves understanding, dialogue, agreement, harmony and common values and ideas among cultures.

Cultural diversity has become a topic of such relevance nowadays, that in 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed “The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity” that recognizes it as a Common Patrimony of Humanity (UNESCO, 2001). In general, this declaration states that cultural diversity must be protected and preserved.

When the multiplicity of cultures is mostly due to immigration, as it is the case of Montreal, governments must create policies that favor social, work-related and cultural inclusion of immigrants in the society. The promotion and respect from the receptor society to the immigrant’s traditions and vice versa. There are cases in which these conditions are not given, and this situation creates rejection, marginalization and poverty for the immigrant. They simply do not get included in the society, or they create closed isolated communities in which they only practice their own traditions. On the contrary, in Montreal; it is visible that there is a mutual agreement of respect and harmony with immigrants.

Many people may think that by including immigrants in their society and giving them such respect, the receiver society may lose the purity or the foundations of their own culture. However, I do not think that in Montreal there has been a

homogenization or a loss of values. As matter of fact, they have great respect for their aborigines and for their own internal sub-cultures. This city is a proof that it is possible to respect and accept the immigrants in their territory without leaving aside their own culture, instead, their culture evolves and it is enriched by the influence of immigrants. The impact of cultural diversity on Montreal is positive in many aspects. For instance, it contributes to the expansion of artistic expressions, as music and literature and it encourages gastronomic innovations.

As a matter fact, the cultural institutions of Montreal as museums, concert halls, theaters, and others show a variety of cultural artistic manifestations from many parts of the world and the local people are actually very interested in them. It is possible to find restaurants and cafes from every part of the world that you can imagine. Just by taking a walk around downtown Montreal, it is possible to find people and stores from many nationalities. Only as a reference, there are three Venezuelan restaurants, and even a Venezuelan night club.

There is a main avenue in Montreal called Saint Laurent Boulevard; it separates the east and the west of the city. This street historically separated the city by language and ethnicity, having English-speaking population to the west, and French-speaking population to the east. Nowadays, it has become a place of encounter for all the cultures and nationalities that live in Montreal with restaurants, cafes, pubs, bars and night clubs from numerous parts of the world. The boulevard Saint Laurent synthesizes my impressions of Montreal, a city that is getting over their own internal resentments and that is opening their way to cultural diversity.

CONCLUSIONS

It is not enough to say that I am pleased with having carried out my internship at The Cultural Center Simón Bolívar. For the most part, I regard as admirable the work that the CCSB achieves. This institution represents an open space for the multicultural dialogue, and especially the encounter of the Latin American community in Montreal. It does not matter the race, political or religious beliefs, when people can get together to appreciate art, this is why, I believe that it is invaluable, constructive and gratifying to see how cultural activities, such as poetry readings, concerts and art exhibitions can link up people at the CCSB.

Apart from that, my internship was a process of constant learning. I was able to organize events, approach people and organizations, and be involved in administrative tasks. Even though I was under pressure to accomplish different tasks, it was gratifying to learn everyday and to finally have the satisfaction of having accomplished the goals of the CCSB, and to have fulfilled my own expectations of the internship.

In spite of that, I have to admit that the tasks that I carried out during my internship were hard at times because of my lack of experience. In addition, I acknowledge that as a Modern Language student, I did not prepare properly for the internship. For instance, previous to the internship I could have taken a basic course of administration, organization of events or protocol. However, it was while carrying out the internship that I realized how important it was to gain additional knowledge, aptitudes and skills appropriate for a good performance.

For this reason, I consider that not only me, but all Modern Language students should complement the studies with extracurricular activities and formation from different sources to avoid difficulties when carrying out the internship and subsequently, to have a more suitable profile to fulfill different jobs in the future. To add more, after getting the diploma, it is very important to continue taking postgraduate education programs in the preferred area. And the internship is supposed to guide the students to select the area that they could pursue in their succeeding studies.

On top of that, it was not very easy to improve my foreign language skills at work, since I was at a Spanish speaking work environment most of the time. However, since I was staying in a bilingual city as Montreal, I had the opportunity to improve my skills outside of the workplace in both languages, English and French.

Finally, since The Cultural Center Simón Bolívar is located in the city of Montreal – Canada, I wanted to express my impressions of the city and the impact that it caused on me having the chance to stay there. Accordingly, the main feature that impressed me about Montreal from the moment of my arrival was that an appreciable proportion of the population was formed by immigrants. For this reason, after reflecting on my experience in the city and investigating, I could find out different causes for the increasing arrival of immigrants and visitors to Montreal, as well as the impact that they have caused in that society.

My stay in Montreal also allowed me to know an entire reality that I had heard from, but I had never seen in my country, which is the convergence of so many different cultures, origins and ethnicities in the same place.

Beyond that, I could see the way in which all these cultures coexist and interact in the framework of respect, harmony and cultural exchange. I found it fascinating how Montreal is not only multicultural but more than that, it is a culturally diverse city.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the host institution “Cultural Center Simón Bolívar (CCSB)”:

- To continue organizing activities such as the “Fiesta Musical Iberoamericana,” and encouraging the relationship of cooperation among Latin American Consulates in Montreal, as well as the cultural entities of that city, as it is The Symphonic Youth Orchestra. Events of such importance elevate the category and relevance of the Latin American community in Montreal.
- To request to the Ministry of Popular Power for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela to hire more personal or to expand the staff, in order to increase the efficiency of the CCSB to accomplish their goals.
- To plan the activities in a more organized way. For instance, invitations for the activities need to be sent at least one week in advance. Taking into account that Montrealers are very organized and that they do not leave any space for improvisation, they need to be informed of the activities with plenty of time ahead to plan their schedule. This would guarantee the assistance of the audience.
- Acknowledging that most decisions depend on the Ministry in Venezuela rather than on the Consulate in Montreal, I suggest that the Consulate should try, as far as possible to receive more interns. Due to the lack of personnel of the institution, having several interns would be very helpful for them, and it

would open a new possibility of internship for the Modern Language students.

To the School of Modern Languages:

- The Internship department has helped students to get their internship in some organizations or universities through bilateral agreements. However, the most significant agreement that should be done is with the Ministry of the Popular Power for Foreign Affairs. I advice the School of Modern Languages to get an appointment with someone from the Human Resources Department of the Ministry to sign an agreement that allow Modern Language students to carry out their internship abroad. This agreement would permit students to do the internship in any part of the world where Venezuela has a diplomatic mission or in any International Governmental Organization where our country has a delegation of representatives.
- Keep providing students with workshops and courses such as the “Teaching Spanish as a Second Language” and others. These courses are necessary tools for students to perform their internship successfully.

To future students of Modern Languages who would like to do their internship at a Governmental Organization abroad:

- Carrying out the internship at an organization abroad that represents Venezuela, students have to take into considerations that Spanish is going to be almost exclusively the language used at work. For this reason interns should do complementary activities outside the host institution to practice and improve their language abilities.
- Interns should never forget that working at a Venezuelan mission abroad; they are representing and defending the state policies of Venezuela. I would recommend supporting these policies or if the intern's personal beliefs are contrary to governmental policies, it is recommendable to simply be unbiased and impartial about them.
- Be informed about what your tasks during the internship will be about, and be prepared to perform them. Previous to the internship it is important to have at least basic knowledge in the area of administration. Take advantage of the many opportunities for preparation that the University of Los Andes offers. For instance, students could take subjects from the major in Administration or Political Science.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Sample of the database of the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar (CCSB).

UNIVERSIDAD DE QUEBEC EN MONTREAL (UQAM)**Facultad de Arte****Teléfono:** (514) 987-4545**Fax:** (514) 987-4653**Correo electrónico:** arts@uqam.ca**Decana:** Louise Poissant**Teléfono:** (514) 987-3000**Correo electrónico:** poissant.louise@uqam.ca**poste:** 8237

- Departamento de danza

Teléfono: (514) 987-3182**Fax:** (514) 987-4797**Correo electrónico:** danse@uqam.ca**Directora del Departamento:** Marie Beaulieu**Teléfono:** (514) 987-3000**poste:** 7623

- Departamento de Música

Teléfono: (514) 987-4174**Fax:** (514) 987-4637**Correo electrónico:** danse@uqam.ca**Director del Departamento:** André Lamarche**Teléfono:** (514) 987-3000**Correo electrónico:** lamarche.a@uqam.ca**poste:** 5666

- Escuela Superior de Teatro

Teléfono: (514) 987-4116**Fax:** (514) 987-7881**Correo electrónico:** theatre@uqam.ca**Director de la Escuela:** Josette Féral**Teléfono:** (514) 987-3000**Fax:** (514) 987-7881**Correo electrónico:** feral.josette@uqam.ca**poste:** 3255

Appendix 2: Sample of the Evaluative Report of the Cultural Center Simón Bolívar (CCSB).

Consulado General de Republica Bolivariana de Venezuela en Montreal

N° CCSB/FIN281009-001



Informe de Actividad

Identificación de la Actividad

Nombre: Cine Latinoamericano.
Fecha y Hora: Cada miércoles de 6:00 p.m. a 8:00p.m.
Lugar: Centro Cultural Simón Bolívar

Desarrollo

Asistencia promedio: 100 personas
Duración: 10 horas.

Evaluación

Logros a destacar

Las proyecciones de cine latinoamericano son una cita fija en el público del Centro Cultural Simón Bolívar y es una de las actividades preferidas y de las más concurridas, gracias a los subtítulos en inglés o francés se puede atraer a una mayor audiencia.

Aspectos mejorables

Se podría mejorar si se contase con ciertas comodidades que les permitan a los asistentes disfrutar aún más de esta actividad; por ejemplo, una pantalla de proyección de alta definición, 2 cornetas de 250 vatios. Para mejor presentación, se requiere de un material que permita bloquear la luz (temporalmente) que entra a la sala a través de sus dos puertas ya que esto es imprescindible para poder lograr el efecto de “sala de cine”.

Difusión

A través de la publicación del diario “Le Bolivarien”, además de la elaboración de afiches y volantes informativos.

Identificación del Responsable

Apellidos y Nombres: Luis Martínez Peraza.
Cargo: Coordinador adjunto.
Responsable del Informe: Luis Martínez Peraza.