

This was the first trip that I ever led, so prior to this Kelly McPhee and I had gone, uh sort of scouting to see what the experience would be like. This was my first trip, leading it and uh I was by myself. Guatemala is so warm, people wise; it was winter when we were there. They are the warmest people I have ever met. There was never a negative interaction with any Guatemalan's while we were there, they were so welcoming and uh, so eager for us to learn about their culture and so open in sharing their culture. This is a family that has nothing by American standards and by the time we finished building the stove I'm thinking alright its time to go and instead they stop me and present me with these gifts and uh I just remember being completely overwhelmed because it didn't make sense. You think no I'm here to give you something and here I am being overwhelmed with gratitude, and love and appreciation.

I would tell the other students who want to travel to Guatemala that it is a great way to stretch yourself, to pull yourself out of your comfort zone, and to grow.

Well the climate atmosphere of Ireland is very um, grey and overcast and a little chilly but the people are the exact opposite of that, they love to talk and tell a good story. They are hilarious.

So it was a very interesting uh dichotomy of what the country sort of looks like and how the people act. It was good because the openness of the people there made it so easy for us to learn about the country and learn especially about their political atmosphere.

Northern Ireland is an area that's made up of several counties that are still part of the United Kingdom. The republic of Ireland has been independent since the early twentieth century. And the North since, and especially during the 60's through the 90's has been fraught with a lot of political violence.

Tony Kennedy who organized the John Hewitt international summer school at the end of the month which we attended where our plays were performed told us a story about how his son was bicycling around town one day and was getting toward a Protestant area when he was stopped by several boys who asked if he was Catholic or Protestant. They asked him to spell Christmas and once he got to H and said H they knew he was Catholic and uh, started beating him up and throwing things at him as he was trying to get away.

It's a situation where everyone is walking on eggshells and they interact with each other as little as possible in order to avoid those confrontations.

So in the first week was really just a bombardment on all of us uh the culture that is Ireland and that is of Northern Ireland and how it is different. There were about four libraries, four libraries, three libraries um that were in of walking distance of where we were staying in Armagh, in the center of um northern Ireland.

So I had made arrangements with the Irish local and studies library, we went there one afternoon and they put out just tables full of folklore, I mean we were like kids in a candy store.

I realized when we did the performance here in September the plays that we developed in July, In Armagh, that what they had learned was not just play writing, what they had learned was how to be citizens of the world.

They are in kind of in this frozen place. They have gone you know 15 years past the decommissioning of all those weapons and they are in primarily peaceful place but they have an extraordinary segregated population. 93% of all publicly funded schools in northern Ireland are either Catholic and Protestant and so they do not see the other side till they get to the work place and by that time they have so many archetypes ya know sunk in their brain that it is impossible to untie them. And so what the politicians are looking for is something like theater. A group project that is community based that is grassroots that can tell stories.

When we asked the people of Ireland about the troubles they would usually preference it by saying oh it all started in 1590 with king Billy...and we were like really?