

Reykjalundur Reflections

Coming to Iceland, I didn't have many expectations for what was to come. I was more so simply excited to embark on a journey of learning an occupational therapy mental health practice through the lens of Icelandic culture. At Reykjalundur, I've learned so many valuable skills, both professionally and personally, that I'm eager to bring home to Canada as I start my career as an occupational therapist.

Being able to work alongside and learn from an incredible team of Icelandic occupational therapists has truly been the experience of a lifetime! The occupational therapy team here at Reykjalundur was so generous and supportive throughout our 7-week clinical placement and I could not be more grateful. One thing I absolutely loved about working with this team is their ability to celebrate anything and everything. There was always something to celebrate in the occupational therapy department, which made coming to Reykjalundur each day that much easier. Perhaps it was the many birthdays that were, coincidentally, in the months of September and October (but I guess we'll never know!). They all lead with empathy, humility, and compassion in everything they do, and I will miss them all dearly!

One of my favourite memories at Reykjalundur is being a part of the craft groups. Seeing people participate in a preferred activity and be fully engaged and regulated perfectly encapsulates occupational therapy in action. I've also learned that engaging in activity alongside others opens the door for co-regulation and therapeutic connection to take place.

From a Canadian occupational therapy student perspective, Reykjalundur's approach to health care and rehabilitation feels comprehensive and holistic. Potentially due to the relatively small size of Iceland, the centralized rehabilitation centre seems extremely beneficial for clients. Being able to access multiple fields of health care in one place within a 6-week treatment plan feels both efficient and also empowering for clients themselves.

The gratitude I feel for the experiences I've been able to have while at Reykjalundur and in Iceland is truly endless. From braving the unpredictable weather, to navigating bus times and routes, to seeing occupational therapy practices at Reykjalundur, Liosið, and Kelppur, as well as within community spaces such as Hlutverkasetur, to Icelandic home cooked meals, and even to visiting the countryside with our preceptor Rósa, I feel so lucky to have had such a local and authentic Icelandic experience. I'm bringing home a breadth of knowledge of mental health occupational therapy practice.

This isn't a goodbye, but rather, see you later! :)

Damon Rutledge