## Journal: s422 Momo Smithers New Zealand –English 1st Language

Despite the amount of preparation that went into GEE, it was an understatement to say I was nervous. Days prior to GEE I questioned my ability to be a good leader and action all the elements of preparation we had put in. Hearing parts of stories from previous years really made me realise the role I had to play as a leader and understand the backgrounds of my possible members. However I think my initial level of nerves were good. I was more organised and had the initial messages and instructions for my team saved to my desk top.

There is something very exciting and in some respects, incomprehensible about being able to communicate with complete strangers over thousands of kilometres, a range of cultures, completely different backgrounds, time differences and even days of the week and be bound by one common factor of completing a proposal together. Being part of GEE has been one of my biggest challenges as a leader. It probably precedes leadership roles in high school or even a hostel RA. There is the unavoidable challenge of not be able to communicate and working together face-to-face, in the same place at the same time. There were moments where I wish I could teleport and get part of a report from my members. However it could also be seen as one of the advantages of a Global Team. Being struck with the Flu half way into the competition was very frustrating. There was nothing I could do, however it meant I could still communicate and work with my team, sitting in bed in my pyjamas.

My leadership skills have grown throughout the competition as different situations allowed me to push myself to deal with them. I had to learn to compromise and adapt to different members and their cultures. Some members would prefer to be directed and others just wanted to be given a task and did not want to contribute ideas. The level of interaction and communication also varied within my team. Some members preferred to focus on their given task. I therefore had to be aware of the best ways to communicate to each member in order to keep building their trust and avoid ‘cultural noise’.

Also, in some ways I was completely wrong and in others I was right. I was right to think that this was not going to be easy and that I would learn a lot about my leadership skills and how I would relate with different cultures. I was wrong to take on board cultural stereotypes and cultural assumptions so much. I was prepared to lose my American team mates, however they proved to be the most dedicated and hard working members. Though in some ways their cultural characteristics where right, he preferred to cut straight to the chase when it came to communicating to the other members. I realised within my leadership style I preferred to spend time getting to know my members and communicating with them and offering praise when something had been done well. I could see great efficiency in his way of doing things. As the weeks progressed I feel I was able to learn from him the most and we were able complement each others respective personalities.

As Deb said in one of the Workshops, what we are doing are only ideas, ideas are worth nothing if we don’t do something with them. Very true. The point of our team’s proposal was that it was simple, it could be done and at low cost. The more you think about it, the more real it could be. I don’t know if it will be possible for me to turn our idea into reality yet, but at the very least, I have learnt skills that will come in use in the future in so many different areas.