

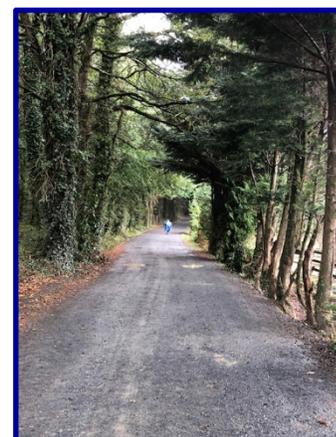


Why the Camino de Santiago?

In relation to my leadership I wanted to explore, deeply understand and enact on authentic leadership and leadership as presence. By being an authentic leader truly present with colleagues, this will have significant implication in creating a collaborative environment where risk taking is supported and we learn by reflecting effectively on our experiences. As John Dewey quotes, "We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience." My aspiration for myself as a leader is to be an authentic leader who is fully present to members of community in our day to day work and learning together. This learning to take place in a collaborative learning environment where risk taking is supported and effective reflection is supported. To be authentic, I need to truly know the person (myself) who leads. This personal and professional inquiry led me to the purpose of my Camino experience.

I wanted to take a step back and focus more on learning to be truly present with myself and other people. There was a need to remove myself from the busyness of my tasks and focus on being in the moment. Travelling to Spain, the away from home experience, gave me the opportunity to spend time walking the Camino de Santiago. The focus was to learn to walk in a relaxed manner and take time away to be truly present with myself and other people. I kept a journal each day and focused on the relationships I developed along the way.

Before leaving Australia, I prepared my journal and myself mentally for what I was going to commit to each day. I had two major goals whilst on the Camino, firstly that I was not going to complain about anything over the eight days and secondly, that we (the three of us) would climb every mountain together; no matter what that mountain was – whether it was blisters, extreme weather, or literally climbing a Spanish Mountain.



Inside the cover of my journal, I wrote a prayer which I said each morning before taking my first step on the Camino track.

The Pilgrim Prayer

*Guardian of my soul,
Guide me on my way this day.
Keep me safe from harm,
Deepen my relationship with you,
Your earth, and all your family.
Strengthen your love with me
That I may be a presence of your peace
In our world.
Amen.*

(Tom Pfeffer & Joyce Rupp – Walk in a relaxed manner)

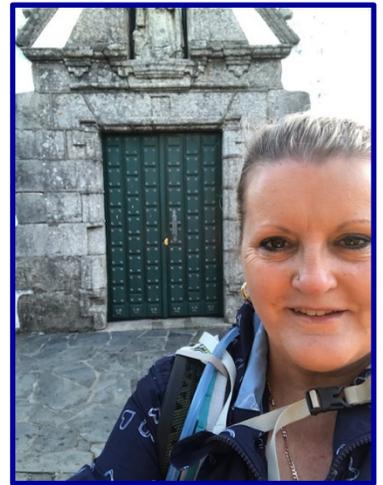
Each day, I was aware of the reflection questions that I had set out in my journal that would support me with my personal and professional inquiry.

- What was it I did each day to learn more about myself?
- What did I do to be truly present with myself and other people?
- What type of collaboration was I involved in?
- What strategies took place during the collaboration?
- What leadership lessons did I encounter along the way?
- What surprises did I experience?
- What regrets do I have today?
- What challenges did I face today?
- How might I integrate my reflections/learnings into my life?

No one knew my story and wasn't interested in what my 'job' was. There were no labels – I was 'be me now'. I felt like I was being truly me in the moment.

Whoever I met in a particular moment or day, I knew I might never meet again. I took the time to live for now. I constantly reminded myself each moment is precious, this is not about after the Camino, but about Now!

When entering the Obradoiro Square where the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela presents itself whole, I had very mixed emotions. I was proud, excited and satisfied that I had reached one of the most spiritual destinations I have ever journeyed to. I had walked in the footsteps of St James, one of Jesus' apostles who had completed this journey to spread Christianity throughout Spain. I was sad because my first Camino journey had finished and now it is reflecting on the journey and entering my reflections into my daily life.



It was a journey of transformation which had a clear intent of what I needed to incorporate in my life. The need to simplify my life, look around and enjoy what is in the space. Remind myself of the freedom I have to let go of 'stuff' that I don't need to carry to weigh me down physically and mentally.

I have the capacity to create space in my life by releasing things that no longer serve me; things that don't positively contribute to my life. The realisation that I need to let go of unnecessary baggage and ask myself – what is actually important to me? This is an opportunity to declutter my life, consume less and have the freedom to be who I am, made in the image of God.

Learnings I will transfer to my leadership now that I am back in the school community environment are:

- Reach out and walk with others that have the same intention and are able to identify our purpose/mission.
- Live my best life, help others when I can and feel a sense of belonging.
- Share the journey with colleagues; make the connections and inspire others through my journey and learning. Be more aware of my surroundings and fellow 'pilgrims'; sharing and community were and still are a big part of my Camino journey. I was part of something greater than just myself. I had a regular connection with many stakeholders along the path and this is true in my leadership role.
- Drop disempowering beliefs and perceived limitations – I can do this! Upgrade my beliefs about what is possible.
- It's ok to be uncomfortable – you can't plan magic! Magic includes the unexpected, the unknown. Unexpected moments when I was pushed out of my comfort zone that transformation occurred. The Camino made demands of me, to see what I was made of.
- Stay open – openness to new things, new ways of being dependent on the moment you are in and all the circumstances at the time. Staying open requires courage. Take time to question my thoughts, beliefs and actions and be open to better ideas and ways of doing things.

- Continue to be free to be myself, sharing and revealing my true self to others; being authentically present in the moment. Forget about someday – be in the NOW! Living the day with each step. The opportunity only exists Now...now is all I've got so live it! More aliveness in my life and being with people. The continuation of bringing more awareness in and connecting with people in person with no distractions or interruptions.
- Reclaim passion and commitment – I achieved my two goals. I was on a mission and mission achieved. Mission is a critical item for today, for now!
- The importance of practicing gratitude and naming what I am grateful for. The importance of finding the beauty and joy in the simple things in life and celebrate the treasures. Whilst on the journey, there were plenty of signs around to guide me towards my destination. This is also in life; there are signs that I need to be aware of so I can see, learn and benefit from them.
- On the Camino, there was a lack of small talk. Because we were authentically in the moment with each other, the talk was meaningful. I'm more aware of how I speak and interact with others. I am mindful of my thoughts and notice when negativity and criticism begin to creep in and question how meaningful is this negativity.



My final reflection is around the importance of choosing my state of being. My internal state of being is always broadcasted all around me no matter what time of the day it is. It is crucial that I am in tune with my frequency and what I am emitting. This is what attracts people, events and circumstances into my life. It all starts from within!

I am so eager and ready for the next adventure/journey and the impact this will have on my life to empower myself to be the best I can be, so I can then empower others to be the best they can be.

On the final day of walking the Camino the following quote appeared on my facebook page - "Faith does not mean trusting God to stop the storm. It means trusting him to strengthen us as we walk through the storm. Amen".

What a finish or should I say what a beginning - Beun Camino!

Cathy Grace – Murtoa

