**Journal 1: 10%**

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When I first registered for IED 373 I was excited but wasn’t exactly sure what to expect. I found myself asking a lot of family members and close friends what they thought it was going to be like. Most were unsure, but figured it would be centered on history and culture. Initially the main thing that I had trouble understanding was why we had to take an aboriginal specific course but are not required to take courses on teaching any other race. Then, I remembered the history of Canada and its people, and the reason for an Aboriginal specific course made more sense. Looking back, I think the last time I studied Canadian history was in grade 10, so about 7 years ago. So, I think it is safe to say that I am quite rusty.

I was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and moved to Calgary, Alberta when I was four years old. So, my understanding of aboriginals came mostly from stories that originated in Alberta. In elementary school I remembering going to Outdoor School where we went on hiking trips, learnt about wild animals and plants in Alberta and slept in teepees. In Junior High School I remember a lot of students coming from the reserves. All the students coming from the reserves were evenly mixed into all of the classes. I remember there was a room called the “Eagles Nest” which was a place that the aboriginal students could go for tutoring, to hang out and I think if they got in trouble they would go there. We had an additional room called the “Timeout Room” which was for all students if they misbehaved, similar to in class detention. I was only sent their once, so I can’t remember if the aboriginal students had a choice if they wanted to go to the Timeout Room or the Eagles Nest. The school was very welcoming to the aboriginal students. To be honest I treated them like any other student and became quite good friends with them. We had aboriginal days where all of the Aboriginal students and their families came from the reserves and put on a large presentation where they were dressed in traditional outfits. I remember really enjoying this activity day because we got the day off school, but also because I have always found aboriginal culture very interesting. Also, most of the students had last names that I had never heard before most including animals and natures. In High School, the designated school for most aboriginal students was Beaverbrook, and I went to Central Memorial High School. I think there may have been 5 aboriginal people in my school. So, I was kind of drawn away from the culture in High School.

One thing that I find interesting and enjoy about Calgary is that the main roads are named after aboriginals: Deerfoot, Crowchild and Sarcee. I moved to White Rock, British Columbia in my first year out of University, and attended Kwantlen Polytechnic University in Surrey. There was a large emphasis on East Indian culture there. For the first time I was the minority in the school. At first it was bizarre because I didn’t understand the culture, but within a month or two I was very accustomed to the traditions and everything became second nature. Therefore, I got a slight understanding what being a minority felt like. I moved to Victoria in 2010, and did not realize how rich the native culture was here until I travelled along the Malahat to Nanaimo for basketball. In addition, touring the Royal BC museum and seeing the totem poles in Beacon Hill Park was really cool.

The most recent thing that I learned about aboriginal culture was in my community and population health class. I actually wrote about a broad overview of the major health issues and the determinants of health impacting Aboriginal population on my final. The determinants of health are listed below:

**Individual**: higher risk of depression, diabetes, injury and poisoning, circulatory diseases, cancer, respiratory diseases, sexually transmitted infection than the most Canadians due to lifestyle choices.

**Income and social status**: aboriginal people are the poorest of all minority groups in Canada.

**Social support networks**: 90,000 residential school survivors are unable to establish effective relationships with families and friends as a result of being taken away at an early age. As a result, the usual parenting, role modeling and social bonds that occur with family, friends and community were severely and permanently damaged.

**Education**: Aboriginal peoples on the whole are less educated. Reasons for not completing post secondary: family responsibilities for woman and financial reasons for men.

**Employment/working conditions**: fewer aboriginal people are in the workforce due to lower educational attainment. Most are employed in position where they have little control over their work conditions. Unemployment rates are higher for aboriginals compared to general Canadian population

**Social environment**: the effect of colonization and the Indian act destroyed indigenous cultures. The goal of aboriginal governments is self determination/governance in all areas that affect their health and well being.

**Physical environment**: aboriginals are more likely to live in environments that have a negative impact on their health and well being. More likely to live in overcrowded dwellings. 50 communities were under boil advisory from 6 months to one year (did not have access to clean water). There are over 2500 contamination issues and 30% of aboriginal households are in need of major repairs.

**Personal health practices and coping skills**: do not have the infrastructure to promote healthy lifestyles choices/behaviours.

**Healthy child development**: more likely to be born into poverty, grow up in lone parent families and live in overcrowded dwellings.

**Health services**: with current nursing shortage, health promotion and disease prevention activities have become secondary as treatment becomes the primary activity and concern for nurses.

**Gender**: health concerns for women were family violence, diabetes, substance abuse and mental health issues.

**Culture**: poor socioeconomic conditions have lead to the lack of culturally appropriate programs and services as well as a shortage of culturally sensitive health care workers. Aboriginals face racism and discrimination on a day to day basis. Loss of indigenous language has been associated with higher rates of depression, alcoholism, suicide and violence, and as having a greater impact on youth.

I had previous knowledge that the reserves were not the healthiest places on the earth, but I had no idea of the extent of the problem. Therefore, taking the community and population health class was an eye opening experience that increased my interest in working with aboriginal students and families. On the other hand my love of biology, my second teaching area, has also drawn me towards aboriginal culture due to their respect for nature. Therefore, the main things that I want to get out of this particular class is where I should to start to help and how to effectively work with and help aboriginal communities, families and students. The readings that we have done so far have only increased my desire to help with the aboriginal community because I feel incredibly guilty and upset reading about how aboriginals were/are treated. Even though it wasn’t my doing I feel very responsible. As a result, I want to learn more about the history, culture and lifestyle of aboriginal people so that I can get a better idea of how I can help them in the near future.

**References:**

The health status of canada’s first nations, metis and inuit people. (2005). Retrieved January 17th, 2012, from <http://healthcouncilcanada.ca.c9.previewyoursite.com/docs/papers/2005/BkgrdHealthyCdnsENG.pdf>