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GLBL 1000-01

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June 11, 2022

### Reflective Essay

In Kamloops, there are Indigenous Reserve lands that belong to the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc. Growing up in Kamloops, I have known about these Reserve lands, but also not learned a whole lot about them. Throughout my school life, I have been able to touch te on the Tk'emlúps very briefly Secwépemc people, and seemed to glaze over other Indigenous bands and group them together as a whole. Many of my textbooks in my classes were dated, and referred to Indigenous peoples as "Natives" or even "Indians." I was always curious about Indigenous peoples in Elementary School and High School, but our curriculum never went into much detail about who they are. Our textbooks always referred to Indigenous peoples in the past, but never in the modern day and how the past has affected them.

I did not learn about Indigenous peoples in depth until my university courses. Many of my English courses revolved around Indigenous literature. However, to understand that literature, I had to understand the way these people live and their ways of knowing. In one course, I spent time learning about the Anishinaabe people who live around the Great Lakes of Canada. The Anishinaabe include several different Indigenous peoples, including Ojibwe. Once we as a class learned and were able to understand how they live and their ways of knowing, we could then read the literature of the Anishinaabe artists. This made understanding the literature much easier and much deeper as well. In another course I focused on the bands along the west coast including the Haida, Bella Coola, and Chinook. In this course, I learned about the story of Turtle Island that many Indigenous peoples refer to

the continent of North America as. Turtle Island speaks to various spiritual beliefs about creation and is considered an icon of life. Much like how there some Caucasian beliefs about the Big Bang, or the Christian story with Adam and Eve. The story of Turtle Island also addresses various spiritual and cultural beliefs that range from band to band. This was important in my learning as it showed the contrast in how many Indigenous peoples can have the same story, but have different spiritual and cultural aspects to it.

I did not start to learn about the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc peoples until my first year of the Bachelor of Education. This was the year that people were finding unmarked children's burial sites on Residential grounds across Canada. On the Kamloops Residential School grounds, they found 215 unmarked grave sites. This prompted further talks and discussions in the Education cohorts. Many of these discussions were heavy on the soul, and many of us as a group had to debrief after such a heavy topic. These conversations need to be had, to further how the information is being spread, as many of us were not aware of how dire the situation really was. Along with these discussions, we were introduced to the First Peoples Principles of Learning. These ways of learning are in every Elementary School in British Columbia and are incorporated into daily lessons and learning practices. I really like these ways of learning as they are a more holistic approach to learning. This does not mean we throw Western learning out the window; we are able to compatibly use both ways of learning together in a system that works well for both. One of my favourite First Peoples Principles of Learning is "Learning takes patience and time." This learning aspect is quite easy to work into lesson plans and practices, and we as teachers can show students how to be patient, and that not everything they learn they will know instantaneously. It is also a really good life lesson to bring into any aspect of life.

Learning about various Indigenous bands has definitely changed my outlook. I am more aware of how different cultures can change depending on where they live and what ecosystem they are living on. Their spiritual aspects of the same stories can change from band to band, which is really fascinating to listen to. I have listened to many different variations of the Creator story. The most important aspect I have taken away from my learning is to listen; listen to the stories, listen to the information, listen to the elders, just listen, and take it in.