

Reflection

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First Nations Learning Principles

“Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one’s actions”

“Learning is embedded in memory, history and story”

“Learning involves patience and time”

On June 5, 2017, I experienced a drastic and awakening experience. I felt a jolt of realization; it opened my eyes to the cruel suffering of the First Nations people. I have, of course, been taught by myself and many others about colonization times and its consequences. I have been through many terms on where the main focus was the experience and culture of indigenous people. However, I'd like to say that learning by reading and watching doesn't leave much of an imprint, because it all seems too far away. Not understanding, not comprehending, makes a matter seem to irrelevant no matter how important and symbolic it may be. However, I did experience one experience in which I could understand, on a tiny level, the emotions the First Nations felt.

My group and I were given an assignment: create a 2D model of the nation of Kwakwaka'wakw. We did. My group and I *had* worked on it long and hard. We painstakingly sought new ways to improve on it and created creative new ideas to make it prettier. So you can imagine our pain and anger when somebody just randomly ripped and squished it. Up until that point, I could never really comprehend the anger of the First Nations people. I knew it was unfair and inhumane. I just never felt it. However, then I did. Then, I finally understood that anger that the First Nations felt when their land was ripped and torn from them.

My group and I only worked on it for what, a month or two? The First Nations hand built a nation out of *nothing* and inhabited it for thousands of years! We just painted and drew. They cultivated, farmed, fished, logged, built, learned, taught and lived on that land, only to have it taken away from them by a bunch of newcomers! It was infuriating for us, but must've been life-changing for them! For me, it was just anger. Anger at maltreatment, anger at hard work being wasted, and anger at teachers who just *ripped* it. However, for them it must've been traumatising, infuriating, and enough anger to start a war. Hot, Cold and Blind Rage.

I think I learned something, according to the Principle of Learning, "*Learning involved recognizing the consequences of one's actions*". The Canadian government is now recognizing that sending innocent young children to school, forcing them from their parents, cutting their hair, and stripping them from their rightful culture is not right. I have learned that no matter what you do, *you* are responsible for the outcomes of your actions, good or bad. Even though the last residential school closed in 1996 (which in my opinion is simply outrageous!) people are learning from their mistakes and "recognizing the consequences" of their actions. I am now recognizing, thanks to that principle, that not all of the things I do are exactly righteous and holy.

It's funny how people can take the most far fetched things and relate to them. I do it all the time, and it gives me a new perspective on new things. It made me put myself in indigenous shoes, what emotions would I have felt if a bunch of people I've never met in my entire life, suddenly tore my home apart? What if my entire community suddenly died of a disease that was not meant to be in our community? What if everywhere there was the scent of death, orphaned children, or now children at all? It really makes me think. Maybe the process of thinking contributed to the emotions I felt, and added to the realness and authenticity of that experimental experience.

The other thing I learned is that "*Learning is embedded in memory, history and story*". Learning is everywhere, both past and present. The fact that we as humans are still living and breathing, means that we have somehow moved on and learned from our past mistakes and have improved. That we have done something right. Learning is everywhere. I learned that day, how learning is *everywhere*. The First Nations people had survived on this land for thousands and thousands of years. They didn't have a gigantic department store where they could magically buy doritos and Armani clothing. They used the best and most bountiful resource there is: Nature. They didn't just suddenly know how to properly run a society or build houses or make clothing, they learned it. They didn't immediately know which foods are poisonous or the most efficient way to hunt, they learned it. I have also realized that all the information we have about colonization times and First Nations culture is passed down through many generations. Wisdom, skills and life lessons are all learned from parents to children.

Another thing I learned was that "Learning involves patience and time". At first, when people started folding up our nations, or ripping them to be exact, I felt super *duper* angry! I thought to myself, "This isn't fair! I think a lot of people felt this way. However, I chose not to express it, and in the end, I understood why what happened happened. What I learned justified the unfairness. As I learned that day, colonization didn't just "happen". It took hundreds and hundreds of years. People didn't suddenly

decide to discriminate against the people who were originally from the land. They didn't decide overnight to build schools and snatch young children from their parents. It was a gradual process, like developing a chronic disease.

Like an illness, the road to recovery is the longest. Because of the video presentation, I'm pretty sure the scars left behind by some of the Europeans haven't healed yet. However, they have begun. It's like putting a band-aid on a bleeding cut. It's not going to fix it, but it will help to stop the flow. I relate trauma of many First Nations people to this quote (one of my favourites) by Winston Churchill:

"Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

It's like saying that even though the psychological shadow left behind from colonization and the harsh and inhumane treatment of indigenous people, people are on the road to recovery and people are slowly fixing things. It has given me, in a way, a new mini-way of thinking. I now understand, to a deeper level, that some scars are too deep to fully recover from, but by time, deep wounds will gradually heal.

The video Ms. Price played was "Uplifting". What really registered into my mind was that that girl's parents were drug addicts and alcoholics (I'm pretty sure), yet she found the strength in her to leave behind her parent's ways and become a better person. A person who would "make her ancestors proud".

Altogether, that day I learned a lot. I felt a variety of emotions. Anger to sadness, relief to joy. It was an experience that taught me many things.