

ALTERING PERCEPTIONS THROUGH INDIGENOUS STUDIES: THE EFFECTS OF IMMERSION IN HAWAIIAN TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE (TEK) ON NON-NATIVE AND PART-NATIVE STUDENTS

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Abstract / Résumé

The Hawaiian People have a unique and detailed knowledge of their environment; one that is rarely experienced by most of the inhabitants of the islands. This paper presents a qualitative content analysis of how the students of an undergraduate introductory course on Hawaiian traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) responded to the course curriculum and instructional methodologies. The varied responses demonstrate the importance of a TEK course to education. The paper also explores the application and implications of incorporating such a course, and provides prospective educators with a model for the curriculum and instruction of future courses on Indigenous environmental knowledge.

Les Hawaïens possèdent une connaissance unique et détaillée de leur environnement, qui la plupart des résidents des îles acquièrent rarement. L'article présente une analyse qualitative de contenu de la façon dont les étudiants d'un cours d'introduction du premier cycle universitaire sur le savoir écologique traditionnel ont réagi au programme du cours et aux méthodes d'enseignement. Les réactions variées démontrent l'importance d'un cours sur le savoir écologique traditionnel dans l'éducation. L'article explore également la mise en oeuvre d'un tel cours et ses incidences, tout en offrant aux éducateurs éventuels un modèle de programme et d'enseignement des cours futurs sur les connaissances environnementales autochtones.

What is Traditional Ecological Knowledge?

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) refers to the knowledge base acquired by Indigenous and local peoples over thousands of years through direct contact with the environment. "It includes an intimate and detailed knowledge of plants, animals and natural phenomena, the development and use of appropriate technologies for hunting, fishing, trapping, agriculture, and forestry, and a holistic knowledge, or 'world view' which parallels the scientific discipline of ecology" (Bourque & Inglis, 1993, p.vi).

TEK can encompass spiritual, cultural, and social aspects as well as substantive and procedural ecological knowledge. Furthermore, TEK is both evolutionary and dynamic in perspective, and is frequently expressed in terms of roles, respect, and responsibilities (Doubleday, 1993). TEK is an attribute of societies (a) with historical continuity in resource use practices, and (b) that are usually non-industrial or less technologically developed; mostly Indigenous and/or tribal (Berkes, 1993). Chief Robert Wavey of the Fox Lake First Nation of Manitoba states that "the knowledge which Indigenous people hold of the earth, its ecosystems, the wildlife, fisheries, forests and other integrated living systems is extensive and extremely accurate" (1993, p.11).

TEK is specific to the group that it belongs to. It is local and can include customary rules and laws, rooted in the values and norms of the community from which it developed. Hunn (1999) points out that it is local because of its use, acquisition, and transmission: "it is acquired via direct personal experience, is transmitted orally within a community, and is validated by its relevance to the daily struggle to wrest a livelihood from one's land" (pp.23-24). Because it is local knowledge, TEK is also fragile. It is specific to its immediate environment and will not be entirely common to any other community. A consequence of this is that the knowledge lives and dies with the community that sustains it and that it sustains, but a benefit is that "the value of TEK is additive across the world's cultures" (Hunn, 1999; p.24). As a whole, TEK systems embody the cultural diversity of humanity, and must be preserved and practiced. Hunn (1999) states that in order to preserve the full value of TEK, member of the traditional community must be allowed to apply, maintain and modify the knowledge as well as "pass it on to their descendants as still useful knowledge" (p.27).

It is vital to point out that TEK is still being eliminated on a daily basis through the colonization, acculturation, and elimination of practitioners and potential practitioners; and through the destruction of necessary unique environments and environmental resources. There are also still a large number of individuals, companies, and organizations that

are in the process of and/or actively looking to exploit TEK for the financial or material gain.

The TEK Course

This research study was conducted in conjunction with an open elective undergraduate (200-level) class entitled Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). The Traditional Ecological Knowledge class was an experiential, experimental class that incorporated a great deal of self-exploration; it was rooted in Social Constructivism; and it was a culturally relevant, global approach to critical multiculturalism.

The class was taught during the Fall of 2001 at a private university in Honolulu, Hawai'i and consisted of two weekly meetings for one semester (15 weeks). The first was a one-hour session held on Mondays at the university. During these meetings, the class discussed issues and topics in Hawaiian traditional knowledge, went over logistics, and prepared for the second weekly meeting: the Field Experience. The Field Experiences were three-hour sessions held on Wednesdays. During these sessions, the class went to various locations on O'ahu, where the students were instructed by local and Indigenous experts on various topics in Hawaiian traditional knowledge. The TEK course was a series of outdoor experiences interspersed with discussions about how people respond to those experiences.

This course was designed with the intent to build a bridge between western and Indigenous thought, to offer a model future educators may use when designing and delivering courses on Indigenous knowledge, and to be culturally relevant to the students. While only three students identified themselves as part Native American and only one identified herself as part Hawaiian, the course was culturally relevant because of the self-exploration incorporated in the class. Various sense of self activities allowed the students to explore their own cultures and ancestry. Cultural relevance is a very powerful tool to use in education. In her book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching*, Geneva Gay states that culturally responsive teaching is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, and transformative (1998). Culturally relevant pedagogy helps students affirm and accept their own cultural identity (Landson-Billing, 1995).

The knowledge of the local and Indigenous experts was presented as a way of coexisting with the environment in a changing and dynamic world. One of the goals for this class was to teach love and stewardship for the land. These concepts are known in Hawaiian culture as *Aloha 'aina* (love for / of the land) and *Malama 'aina* (Caring for / respect for the land) (Pukui, 1986). This was done through several service-learning

projects during the semester. Through these interactions with the local and Indigenous experts, the students had the opportunity to gain a deeper sense of love for the land and responsibility to the community and the environment. This stewardship is an integral part of Hawaiian traditional knowledge.

The Students

Although there were only twelve students in the class, this group of students was quite varied in background, experiences, and academic goals. Five of the learners are males and seven are females. Two were freshmen, six were sophomores, three were juniors, and one was a senior. Ten of the students are United States citizens, one is a Swedish citizen, and one is a Japanese citizen. Of the US citizens, four of them are "local"—two have lived in Hawai'i all of their lives (one on O'ahu and one on Maui), and two moved to Hawai'i from California but consider themselves local. Four of the learners identified themselves as part Native American or Hawaiian. Nine of the students are Caucasian, one is Asian (Japanese), and two are of mixed ethnicity.

I will now briefly introduce each of the twelve students in the class. This brief introduction to each student will help to give the reader a sense of the dynamics of the class, and is important to the issues of identity that are considered in this study.

Kai is a 21-year old Japanese citizen from Tokyo, Japan. While he describes his ancestry as Japanese, he describes himself as Japanese and Moroccan, because he lived in Morocco with his father for several of his teenage years prior to coming to Hawai'i. Kai, a biology major, is well-travelled and has much experience with other cultures. Tristan is a 20-year old from Wailuku, Hawai'i. He grew up on Maui, but does not identify completely with local culture. He identifies his ancestry as Polish, French, and Newfoundland. Tristan, an engineering major, is relatively travelled, and is moderately experienced with other cultures. Jennifer is a 20-year old American citizen from Los Angeles, California. She identifies her ancestry as Dutch, Swedish, French, English, German, and Irish. Jennifer, a nursing major, grew up very sheltered in an upper class family, and is inexperienced with other cultures. Samantha is a 20-year old American citizen from Santa Monica, California. She describes herself as local, as she spent her summers in Kailua growing up, until she moved here a few years ago. She identifies her ancestry as African-American, Native American, and "unknown." Samantha, a pre-medicine major, is semi-travelled, and has been exposed to many different cultures growing up. Daisy is also a 20-year old American citizen from New Jersey. She identifies her ancestry as Italian, English, Dutch, and Polish. Daisy,

an anthropology major, is inexperienced with other cultures. Tom is a 20-year old American citizen born in Los Alamitos, California. Although Tom was born in California, he describes himself as local, as he moved to Lanikai when he was young and grew up there. Tom, an undecided major, identifies his ancestry as Irish, German, Greek, and Native American. He is relatively experienced with other cultures. Billy is a 21-year old American citizen from New Jersey. He identifies his ancestry as Irish, Italian, German, and Native American (Kamapo). Billy, a computer science major, has not been exposed to many other cultures. Michael is a 19-year old American citizen from Indianapolis, Indiana. He identifies his ancestry as Austrian, Hungarian, French, and Irish. Michael, a mathematics major, is not very experienced with other cultures, and describes himself by stating "I am an Eagle Scout and a Catholic." Sarah is a 19-year old American citizen from Seattle, Washington. She identifies her ancestry as Irish, Scottish, English, and Norwegian. Sarah, a biology major, has not had much exposure to other cultures. Sylvia, 27, was born in Gotelburg, Sweden. She identifies her ancestry as being Swedish, Jewish, Finnish, Gypsy, and Russian. She is a Swedish citizen, but has travelled extensively and has been exposed to many different cultures. Cindy is a 24-year old American citizen from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Like Jasmine, she was adopted, but unlike Jasmine, she does not know anything about her ancestry. Cindy, a human services major, is not very experienced with other cultures. Jasmine is a 21-year old local girl who was born in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Although she was adopted at a young age into a Caucasian family and grew up in Lanikai, she does know some of her ancestry, which she identifies as Hawaiian, Chinese, Irish, and "unknown." Jasmine, a pre-medicine major, has travelled throughout the USA and Eastern Europe, and has extensive experience with other cultures. She describes herself as "Hawaiian, Born and Raised."

Research Methodology

This qualitative ethnography was a continuing and retrospective content analysis of the effects of a course on the participants. The content analysis focused on three themes that emerged: identity, cultural/Hawaiian knowledge, and environmental knowledge. The theme of identity emerged initially out of the literature review. From the readings, I was led to the conclusion that identity ought to emerge from a study like this one, so I continually looked for and coded student evidence of this theme in the incoming data. The last two themes emerged from the conversations, writings, and field notes that were studied immediately following the course of midterm examination. The analysis of the data for these two themes was retrospective through the midterm, and con-

tinuing following this point in the class. After the midterm, all existing and incoming data was also coded for these two themes. Data were collected from participant observation, interviews, and artifacts.

Student Responses

This Course Bridged Western and Indigenous Thought

Every one of the students came into the course from a western perspective. The most important thing that this course did was take the students out of that perspective and show them how the world is interpreted from an Indigenous perspective: specifically, a Hawaiian perspective. The vehicle through which this exposure occurred was learning primarily from Indigenous experts, as well as the experiential learning, service-learning, and critical multiculturalism that the students experienced.

Even for the students that had lived in Hawai'i their whole lives, this was the first time they had been exposed to an Indigenous culture to such an extent. The field experiences provided the students with a temporary simulation and immersion in Hawaiian culture for three hours each week. One of the experiences that had the greatest effect on the students was service-learning through the teaching of the concepts of *Aloha 'aina* and *Malama 'aina* at Waimanalo stream, Kihei Pua *Lo'i*, and He'eia Fishpond. Seventy-five percent of the students (Jennifer, Samantha, Daisy, Tom, Billy, Sarah, Sylvia, Cindy, and Jasmine) stated that these few experiences were the most profound experiences of the entire course for them. Cindy pointed out that being at these sites gave her "a greater perspective" that made it easier to understand the concepts without the distractions of modern society. The students identify the importance of these experiences because of their active immersion in the culture doing what Sarah stated as "something good for the environment."

This course was successful in creating a learning environment independent and inclusive of both western and Indigenous philosophical perspectives because it was a course of contrasts. While the weekly field experiences provided the students with the "exotic," the Monday discussion sessions was the "familiar," and gave them what Michael called a "home base." It was these sessions that provided an arena for discussions, questions, and a cultural "sense of comfort," as Sylvia stated. She states, "the Monday sessions provided us with a comfortable setting because it was in a classroom and we were able to discuss our responses to the field experiences with each other and you (the instructor)."

Identity and Sense of Self

Through the activities on identity, the students had the opportunity to explore and write about who they are. Gaining this "sense of self" was important so the students could reflect upon their experiences, and look to themselves for cultural comparisons and responses. Tristan points out that "being able to respond to the experience is a crucial part of learning." When exploring other worldviews, it is important to be able to have an internal perspective in which to situate your new experiences.

There were several overall results of the sense-of-self activities on the identities of the students. All of the students began to take an interest in who they are, what their own ancestry is, what their own traditional knowledge was, and how far-removed from it they are. In addition to searching their historical background, the course had a profound effect on the identities of four students in particular, including Sylvia, Tristan, Cindy, and Jasmine.

Through her experiences in the course, Sylvia was finally able to place all of the knowledge in her head into a cultural context, and as a result shifted her identity "to one of a fighter for the environment." Tristan had the realization through the course that he already knew much more than he thought he did about Hawai'i. This realization allowed him to become a more confident person with respect to Hawai'i, and gain overall confidence in his identity. For Cindy, the most important thing about this class was that it showed her people who belong somewhere, and it motivated her to find out where she belongs.

This course helped Jasmine to get in touch with her Hawaiian ancestry, which she previously had not had much access to. This experience shifted her entire identity. Jasmine was the only student that experienced a transformation (Mezirow, 1991) in this course. As a reminder, Jasmine is of part-Hawaiian ancestry, but was adopted into a Caucasian family as a baby. Prior to this course, Jasmine was in a state of searching for something she felt was missing, as she was focused on doing what her father wanted her to do and putting all other things second. She was searching her life and her surroundings for the meaning that constantly eluded her. Jasmine came into the class in this frame of mind, not really knowing what to expect. From the very beginning, this class struck a chord with her. Initially it was due to the focus on the two things she was so desperately searching for, but until now could not put her finger on: Self-Identity, and Hawaiian Culture.

The class ended up being her main impetus and catalyzing agent for a major transformation. Jasmine had many opportunities to reflect and hold discourse, as she spoke with friends during and after class, talked to other friends "about how cool it was," and met with me several

times weekly outside of class. She stated that "the structure of the class allowed for your own thinking to go on." In addition, it was a flexible structure that kept her interest, as we went somewhere different every week. Everywhere we went, she met and interacted with Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians that were proud of their culture, were keeping their traditions alive, and were also helping to enlighten other people about the Hawaiian culture. This was a new and enlightening experience for Jasmine, as she never had the opportunity to be a part of Hawaiian culture growing up. As she began to internalize these lessons and experiences, they resulted in a major transformation within her. While the transformation was not due entirely to this course, the course did provide both the impetus and the environment for the transformational learning experience to take place.

This Course Increased Student Hawaiian/Cultural Knowledge

All of the students discussed learning about many different aspects of the Hawaiian culture. On the first questionnaire, none of the students knew what an *Ahapua'a* was; nor did they know anything about the concepts of *Aloha 'aina* or *Malama 'aina*. However, by the end of the semester they were all able to discuss and accurately define these three fundamental Hawaiian concepts. This learning arose as a result of experience. The service-learning, experiential learning, and critical multiculturalism allowed the students to construct their own knowledge.

Tristan, who actually spent most of the semester seeing what he already knew and reifying his views, stated at the end of the semester that "I have learned a lot more than I already knew. I have never given the Hawaiians enough credit for all their achievements." Jennifer talks about how now she knows that there are people carrying on the Hawaiian traditions, and that she never understood why the Hawaiians did the things they did; she was "just another unaccepting mainlander." However, her experiences in the course have "increased my awareness and appreciation for the Hawaiian culture." Samantha came into the course with the goal of learning "way much more about the Hawaiian culture than I already know" and was successful because she learned about the past as well as the present. Daisy, who's goal was to become more educated and well-rounded, learned many things about how the Hawaiians "recycled everything," and also discussed the concept of *Pono* (balance) with her learning about the cycles of nature. Billy altered his initial views of Hawaiians, stating, "Thinking about it now, I don't think the Hawaiians were primitive at all." He did not stop there, however. Billy learned much during the class and gained a critical perspective about the contemporary issues Hawaiians are facing, stating that he now un-

derstands "why they (Hawaiians) are trying so hard for sovereignty." Sarah mentions that "I didn't know anything about the Hawaiian culture before this class." As a result of her experiences, she states, "I have more respect for them and the things that they do." Sylvia states that this class has taught me so much about Hawaiians."

All of the students stated that they had a shift in their perspective of what all TEK encompassed, and were able to write about their understanding of TEK at the end of the semester. In general, the students came to a fuller understanding of the various aspects of Hawaiian TEK through the experiences in the class, and got the opportunity to explore and "try on" different viewpoints as well as ways of interpreting the natural world. For the students in this course, gaining an understanding of the concept of traditional ecological knowledge was crucial. This concept is vague and difficult to nail down, yet everyone seemed to have a common perception once the class began rolling. The students found themselves immersed in a rich blend of culture, tradition, and environment.

This Course Increased Student Environmental Knowledge

All of the students increased their understanding of the environment from an Indigenous perspective, due mainly to the service-learning and experiential activities that were focused on the concepts of *Aloha 'aina* and *Malama 'aina*. Sylvia demonstrates this, "They (Hawaiians) were also very loving and caring about their lands, which is shown through the concepts of *Aloha 'aina* and *Malama 'aina*. Use only what you need and restore what you borrow from nature. Those are powerful words, especially when there is such a great waste of natural resources today. TEK this semester has taught me that we have to respect and cherish our environment instead of just exploiting it and treating it as a commodity." Most of the students agree with this view, stating similar comments during post-class interviews.

The students identified different aspects of the environment that they learned about. Sarah defines her entire transition through the class on the basis of her increased environmental awareness, "I think that I have become more environment friendly and have changed my habits. I worry about the changes in the environment and am trying to do my part." Michael learned about the effects of invasive species on the environment during the class, "Sometimes good intentions don't help out as much as you'd think they would; look at the well-intended introduced invasive species." Billy states, "I have a better understanding for the condition the environment is in. Also, I understand the large effort it will take to fix it." Tom discusses that the class "made me more aware of my

surroundings and how to use them." Jasmine states that with the two experiences at Waimanalo and *Kihei Pua*, "my visualizations have magnified, and the feel for the importance of the land is overwhelming." Jennifer, Daisy, and Samantha were astonished at how many plants were used by the Hawaiians, and for what purposes. Samantha stated, "It's absolutely astonishing to see how many things are made from some sort of plant. It really makes you think about where things come from and how they are made."

In closing, Kai brings forth an elegant statement about his learning and the environment. Kai points out, "The greatest learning I am making in this class is that I am learning the fact that no matter how much modern technology and fancy gadgets we own, on the very bottom, we are always connected to nature, and we cannot live a day without it."

Incorporating TEK Into the Curriculum

One of the most striking things that this course does is shift the focus of the curriculum from learning about the culture to learning through the culture. Banks (2000) states that "Teachers should help students critically examine their cultural and community knowledge, understand how it relates to institutionalized knowledge systems, and construct new paradigms and conceptions about human diversity" (p. 39). To this end, TEK has a crucial role in education with respect to the sustainability of peoples, environments, resources, and the planet. Cajete argues that ways must be found through education to reclaim and reintegrate traditional knowledge, especially if we are to develop a collective framework for addressing the monumental environmental challenges we face (1994). The design and delivery of TEK courses like this one is one possible way to integrate this crucial knowledge.

When designing and teaching a course such as this, there are certain guidelines that must be met. First and foremost, it is absolutely paramount to include the local and Indigenous experts. The knowledge to be taught in this course is traditional knowledge, and belongs to the cultural groups that developed it. The intellectual property rights of the groups that developed the knowledge must be respected. In that sense, the knowledge must be taught in appropriate settings by appropriate people, following appropriate protocols. By virtue of its contextuality, TEK is in danger of further exploitation by western culture, and specifically by education as the field gains momentum. It is very important when designing a course on these topics to *Nana I Ke Kumu* (Look to the source) and to respect those cultures of which this knowledge is an integral part. Including the local and Indigenous experts avoids the issue of Intellectual Property Rights, because the people teaching the

knowledge are also the keepers of the knowledge. In addition, bringing in local and Indigenous experts keeps the integrity and focus of the course while simultaneously demonstrating respect for the local and Indigenous community. This positive interaction can lead to partnering, community development, and further social and academic learning opportunities for all involved parties.

Because TEK is specific to people in an area as well as their environment, another consideration to take is what the content of the course will include. Focusing on local issues and local knowledge makes contextual sense. The development and instruction of this type of course is applicable to all geographic locations. The important thing to consider is who the local and Indigenous experts in your area are. Their environmental knowledge and the knowledge of their ancestors is what the focus of the course would be. It is imperative that this type of course is taught in an area where there are still practitioners.

This brings up the consideration of where the course could be taught. As any course on Indigenous environmental knowledge should be co-taught with local and Indigenous experts, there must be practitioners in the area. As a consequence of this, it becomes difficult to conceive of teaching this sort of course in an urban environment or even in a rural environment where there are simply no more practitioners. As many Indigenous groups were culturally and historically eliminated to make way for western colonialism, there are many parts of the world where finding practitioners to co-teach this sort of course would be exceedingly difficult. Because of this, a course on Indigenous environmental knowledge can only be taught where there are still Indigenous peoples keeping their environmental knowledge alive. This is an unfortunate consequence of this sort of course, because it is absolutely necessary that local and Indigenous experts be a part of the experience.

In addition to the local and Indigenous experts who will help to teach the course, the role and praxis of the course instructor is another very important consideration. As the course includes a great deal of alternative methods and bridges different cultures, the "instructor" of the course really serves more as a "facilitator" (Brooks-Harris and Stock-Ward, 1999; Heron 1989). The role of the instructor in a course like this is not to just get up and lecture. You must organize the entire experience (including establishing and maintaining contact with presenters), lead discussions, assign grades, rationalize your course to the institution in which it is taught, and serve as a cultural guide (to a lesser degree).

Another important consideration is the "Noble Savage Syndrome." Eliminating stereotypes and disintegrating racism should be one of the primary focuses for a course like this. It is important when planning a

course on TEK to include critical multicultural activities and discussions that work toward helping to dispel these racist notions. Facilitating understanding and cross-cultural sensitivity can be one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching a course of this nature.

The final consideration I identify in this section is identity and sense of place. This consideration is very important, because the course material will probably be unfamiliar territory to most of the students. Participation in the course is effectively inviting the students to place themselves into a mode of self-exploration. When thrust into unfamiliar territory, the first place the students will look is within. It is important to facilitate self-exploration as part of the experience of the course. This will help the students to reflect upon their experiences, and also has the potential to facilitate personal growth. By having the students identify their own sense of place and explore their own identity, they are placed through the course in a context of external exploration coupled with internal exploration. The focus is not on memorizing material, but on exploring other ways of interpreting the natural environment, and bringing those lessons "home" to explore one's own ancestry. This culturally relevant teaching is potentially very powerful.

Discussion

In summary, this study shows that the course was successful in creating a place where people from western and Indigenous worldviews can come together and learn from each other. It was also successful in providing a setting for the students to explore their identities. Furthermore, most of the students increased their Hawaiian/cultural knowledge and their environmental knowledge. These explorations and the degree of the shifts in perspective were different for each student.

The curriculum and instructional methodologies allowed for the student-constructed knowledge. Through service-learning, experiential learning, critical multiculturalism, dialogue and reflection, the students participated in active social constructivism and shifted their perspectives. Many of the students identified that they were moved to see issues in a different way as a result of this course. Their experiences in the course changed their perceptions, values, and identities. In addition, the course made environmental issues personally relevant to all of the students through immersion.

Chief Robert Wavey has stated, "In our severely disrupted global environments, traditional ecological knowledge is now essential for our mutual survival" (Wavey, 1993). One possible way to address our current environmental crisis is through the implementation of courses into the existing educational system that incorporate and teach aspects of TEK,

such as this one. The value and importance of a course like this is becoming more and more evident. What we choose to tell our students represents who we want them to think we are and who they might become (Castenell and Pinar, 1993). It must become a priority to educate people about the current state of the planet, and to show them that alternative possibilities to a science-technology-society do exist. This study demonstrates that running an alternative constructivist course on Indigenous knowledge taught in natural settings using Indigenous experts can be effective.

This type of course teaches about dealing with the environmental issues we are facing. One critique of environmental education is that students get inundated with negative information but don't know what to do to address the problems they study. Through this class, the students were given several opportunities to think globally and act locally. Several of the students shifted their perspective to what Sylvia called "a fighter for the environment." Through the service-learning activities in this course and courses like it, students learn ways to become pro-active, and are given the chance to actually do something about the problems facing their local environment.

There are many possibilities for this type of education. Courses like this have the potential to open students' eyes to contemporary struggles of First Nation Peoples. This exposure and learning can create cultural sensitivity that was previously unattainable, and remains unattainable in our current system of Education. The course is interdisciplinary, and could be used to teach lessons across the curriculum. In addition, the course as designed demonstrates alternative ways of interpreting the natural environment and the role of humans as part of that environment. The course exposes students to local issues facing Indigenous peoples and local areas, and increases cross-cultural competency and understanding. Incorporation of these sorts of courses to students and educators everywhere could possibly increase and advance our cultural sensitivity and environmental ethic globally.

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