



Kiwis, Health, and Sustainability

Lucy Schoolfield, Public Health, Spring 2020

Cultural Exploration

SUMMARY

I traveled to New Zealand through a program with Arizona State University. I traveled throughout the North and South Islands, learning and exploring Maori culture and health in these different geographic areas. I studied how New Zealand has worked to close the health gap between Maori and Pakeha (white European settlers). I was able to visit a Marae and take part in a traditional welcoming ceremony. The woman who ran the Marae is descended from Maori who came in on the very first Waka to New Zealand. It was incredible to hear her stories and witness the resiliency of the Maori. The program also focused on sustainability and kaitiakitanga, so I participated in Environmental restoration in multiple locations, giving back to the earth for future generations.



SPICES

Cultural Exploration was the cornerstone of this experience. Our guide was raised in a Maori village, and took time and exceptional effort to teach us Maori traditions and spirituality. The program was immersive and comprehensive.

HERBS

While in New Zealand, I studied health disparities between indigenous populations and colonizing populations. The experience emphasized equity within health care and its achievability.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

I want to work as a mental health practitioner, where cultural competency is of the utmost importance. This experience taught me that healing is different from person to person, and acknowledging an individual's heritage and beliefs is quintessential for a patient to be fully understood and feel validated. The program also taught me that cultural competency is the bare minimum, and we should always strive for cultural fluency.



IMPACT

The program had a huge component called kaitiakitanga, which is a Maori word that roughly translates to the stewardship of the land for future generations. I was able to actively take part in this, and my group planted over two hundred native trees along a river that often floods to fight erosion. The farmers in the area would not lose pasture land during flooding season any longer. In Christchurch, I visited the red zones, which are areas that are designated unsafe to live due to liquefaction. I took part in a community effort to xeriscape; helping those who lost their homes still take pride in the community

ADVICE

The program for you is out there. Don't worry about not knowing anyone, just find your niche and all will fall into place.