

**EDF4018**

**Assignment 2**

**Hunt, Forage and Grow**

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My own challenging experience of trying to successfully grow enough food to feed those around me has helped to open my eyes up to certain aspects of the struggle for Indigenous Australians to continue to live traditional lives and maintain their culture. I aim to explore this more by looking at my own experience as well as some of the situations that play a part in depriving Indigenous Australians of their culture and way of life.

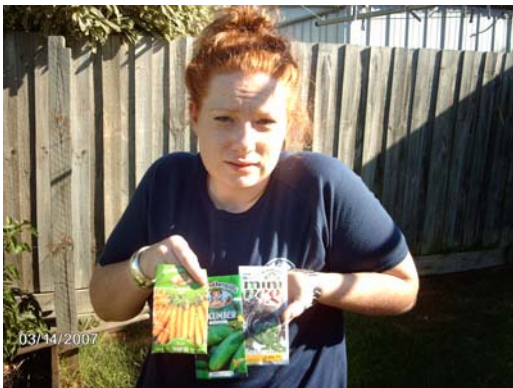
When I first read about this assignment I was quite excited and intrigued. I had never in all my schooling had an assignment that required me to hunt, forage and grow enough food to feed around eight people, and never dreamed I would. As I said I was quite excited, my initial thoughts were “this will be fun and pretty easy” well what can I say, that was probably not the best thought to have. I already knew I was going to go fishing and catch a heap of fish, so I began to think about what I could grow, in the end I didn't really have much choice as there isn't really a big variety of vegetables that grow in less than 9 weeks. It was during this time that I really began to think about the rules and laws that are put in place in regards to hunting and fishing. There are rules in regards to just about everything, to go fishing you need a license, to hunt you need a gun license. Even when you can go fishing there are certain places that extremely limit what you can take home with you. There are areas of land that cannot be hunted on, animals that cannot be hunted. When you think about all these things together there really is a huge amount of rules and laws standing in the way of you hunting and gathering. It is these rules and laws which bring me to an important point. At the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 1978 the “right of Indigenous Peoples to maintain their traditional structure of economy and culture, including their own language”(Battiste & Henderson, 2000) was endorsed. I ask you how this is happening in Australia today with all these rules and laws. It isn't how can Indigenous people live traditional lives when before they can do anything they have to fork out a load of money and pass a heap of tests. This belief of Indigenous people having the right to live and maintain traditional lives is reiterated by the United Nations. In the 1994/95 Draft United Nations declaration of the rights of Indigenous peoples it was declared that

Indigenous peoples have the collective and individual right not to be subjected to ethnocide and cultural genocide, including prevention and redress for:

- a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or their cultural values or ethnic identities;
- b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources. (UN draft declaration, 1995).

This article outlines that Indigenous people can and should be able to maintain traditional life, all aspects of it. It seems to me that Australia agrees with this but only after all their rules have been followed, which is missing the whole point. A lot of this comes down to money. In order for Indigenous peoples to try and live traditionally they have to follow the rules and laws, but in order to do this they need money. If Indigenous peoples are living traditionally how are they expected to make money?

The next step on my hunt, gather and grow expedition was actually planting what I was attempting to grow. But before I could do this I actually had to get the seeds I needed. The only way I knew how to do this was by making a little trip down to Bunnings, with my dad. It was here that I came to my realisation that not much grows in the time I had and especially not at the start of autumn, but persevered and left Bunnings with cucumber, carrot and spinach seeds as well as lettuce and cabbage seedlings.



(My seeds)

Once I got home I actually had to plant them, I think I had momentarily forgotten about this. So off I went planting all my wonderful little vegetables. It was when I was planting that I began to think “this isn’t as easy as I first thought. I also discovered that my packet

of cucumber seeds only contained three seeds instead of ten, this didn't make me happy. During the course of the next 8 weeks I watered and looked after my vegetables. Much to my disappointment I discovered that snails love cabbage and over these weeks the snails absolutely devoured mine. I also realized during this time and especially when I was planting my vegetables how lucky I was that I had my dad helping me. I had absolutely no idea what I was doing, especially when my dad told me I had to cultivate the dirt before I planted my seeds and seedlings and even about how to plant carrots in a line and about spacing all the lettuces out so they would have room to grow. None of this stuff had ever entered my mind before. I just thought you plant stuff and then it grows, just like magic.



**(Me cultivating the soil)**



**(Planting my lettuces)**



**(Watering my new plants)**

How little I actually knew about growing food got me thinking about Aboriginal culture in the classroom. There are a number of important issues that need to be addressed here. Indigenous culture needs to be present in Australian classrooms for a number of reasons. Firstly Indigenous culture, history and traditions need to be incorporated into the school

system to ensure that Indigenous students and their families feel as though they are part of the education system and their beliefs are valued. Battiste & Henderson (2000) state that

International and national recognition of and respect for Indigenous peoples' own customs, rules, and practices for the transmission of their heritage to future generations are essential to Indigenous peoples' enjoyment of human rights and dignity. Indigenous students must see themselves and their heritage as part of the education system.

I think this statement begins to show how important recognition and acknowledgement is for people. For many Indigenous students' school is seen as the main meeting point of their culture and the dominant culture, where the Indigenous culture is usually met with rejection and oppression (Partington, 2005). However this shouldn't be the case.

Indigenous students should be able to successfully attend and complete school and retain their own culture. By ignoring Indigenous culture in the classroom we are disadvantaging Indigenous students and sending the message to other students that "the characteristics of Indigenous people which set them apart from the dominant group should be ignored as of no value, or, at worst, as contemptible" (Partington, 2005).

Teachers and school administration play a big part in making schooling worthwhile and meaningful to students. There is no point expressing the need for Indigenous culture and heritage to be incorporated into the classroom and curriculum if teachers aren't given the necessary training to do so. Partington (2005) believes that teachers will have to find teaching strategies which are appropriate to the backgrounds and characteristics of individual students which will lead to learning. This is a good idea as long as teachers are appropriately trained

without special training...teachers will be unable to achieve changes needed to create appropriate learning environments in the classroom and extend their educative influence into the community...to incorporate the skills and knowledge of the [Indigenous] home and community in the curriculum in order to achieve the desired outcomes, teachers require additional skills of curriculum integration and community consultation.

(Partington, 2005)

The incorporation of Indigenous culture and history in the classroom is beneficial for non-indigenous students as well. It will help to give students an understanding of issues and ideas they really don't know a lot about. I think that for many non-indigenous students the majority of what they hear about Indigenous people and culture maybe negative, therefore this incorporation of culture and history in the classroom would hopefully educate and enlighten students. "Education plays a key role in the preservation, integration, transfer and promotion of local and community wisdom" (Dewer Wilson, 2004). For most non-indigenous students school will be the only place they have a chance to learn about these things.

As I neared the end of my hunt, grow and forage expedition I began to get a little worried, my lettuces were growing to quick, not a lot of my carrots had survived and that it. Everything else was dead or destroyed by snails.



**(My huge lettuces)**



**(My destroyed cabbages)**

But as much as the majority of my vegetables had failed I still had the idea in my head of all those fish I was going to catch, again with my dad. Time slowly began to get away from me and before I new it I only

Had two possible days left that I could go fishing on and as it turned out on the first of these two days my dad had to unexpectantly go into work. "No worries" I thought, I still had one more day but on the second day the sea was to rough and we couldn't go. So after nearly nine weeks of trying to grow, hunt and forage for enough food for eight adults I was left with a huge amount of lettuces (eight in fact) and about seven carrots,

that was it. I was not impressed. But I guess that was all part of the experiment. So I turned up for our class meal with a huge salad consisting of mainly lettuce, three different types though, that has to count for something, some carrots and a red pepper I pinched off one of my dads plants.



**(All that survived of my carrots)**

**(A nice pretty lettuce)**

My dismal performance got me thinking about the kind of stuff I don't know. What hasn't been passed down through generations to me.

For many Indigenous Australians the dominant culture and laws such as fishing and gun licenses are defiantly having a negative impact on their culture. Ward Goodenough (cited in Parington, 2005) states that "culture is a shared system of standards for believing, perceiving, evaluating and acting." Merridy Malin (2005) explains this as something

that is learned, not inherited through our genes...It influences our beliefs and our perceptions of the world around us...It influences our actions which include the language we speak, how we ask questions, show respect...It is all these things and more.

We have to ask ourselves this, what are Indigenous Australians losing because of the laws and rules in place? How can Aboriginal culture continue to flourish and grow and be passed on through generations if many Indigenous Australians cannot continue to practice and teach through traditional ways?

This activity has been really beneficial for my self. It really made me think deeply about a lot of issues.

I learnt a lot and really did enjoy the hunt, forage and grow activity, even though most of my plants failed. I definitely learnt a lot about growing food and how many things can go wrong. Also I now realise how much I rely on money and supermarkets to survive, it's hard to believe but I had never really thought about it before now.

Overall I think a number of things need to be changed in the education system to make sure Indigenous Australians are not only receiving the best education for them but that they are properly represented.

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*United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, [www.unhch.ch](http://www.unhch.ch)