

Going into this class, I never imagined the emotional and personable approach to teaching ‘Case Studies in Canada’s Aboriginal Languages’. Unlike many other language courses, learning Ojibwe isn’t about only learning grammar and memorizing vocabulary but focuses primarily in the culture and growth in vocabulary through storytelling. This method is very different from the traditional approaches that I’ve been accustomed to because it gives me a sense of where the Aboriginal people come from; it is as if I, myself, am integrating into the culture, or at least living snippets of what is exposed to me.

The Shut-Eye Dance group activity, for example, gave me an insight into the emotions and thought process of what the Aboriginal people were, and still are, going through. Originally, I thought it was a folklore, a story that is passed down through generations to teach a specific moral (which, in my opinion, is to be weary or to not blindly follow others); however, it is more than just that. It seems to be a sugar-coated story (sans the animal brutality) to portray what the Aboriginal people were/are going through.

I attempted to break down the story and create a parallel with the group activity to get a better sense of how the story represented the real-life situation. It seems that the killing of the birds represent the departure or removal of the Aboriginal people, whether it be through residential schools, prison, outside marriage or forced assimilation. As a result, the group in the reserves quivered and was broken, which led to trauma and a lack of security among the Aboriginal people, both inside and outside the reserves. This trauma is portrayed by the ducks

with red eyes and a 'kicked-in butt', which is permanent 'damage' as a result of that one duck's disobedience and a constant reminder of what happened and who really is in power.

Never, in a traditional French or any language classroom, would I ever be exposed to language learning in a way where I got to feel what it was like (to a much smaller degree) to be a part of the culture. It makes learning the language more purposeful, in the sense that I get to continue learning the culture as well as the language and understand why it is quickly becoming endangered. It is also rewarding because I get to learn a language in which so much pride and history is incorporated that it not only satisfies my linguistically obsessed side, but my socio-cultural side as well.