

Applied Learning and Cultural Awareness at the JIBC



Photo Credit: Gary Green

“To spiritually survive as a Police Officer in today's urban environment there has to be a strong spiritual base. Police Officers, like warriors of the past, have to be strong to protect the people; strong not only physically, but spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. The sweat lodge does awaken the spiritual in people and this is important.” - Gary Green, LESD105 Instructor.

On Thursday, March 11, 2010 sixteen students from the Law Enforcement Studies Diploma program, along with Instructor Gary Green, attended a sweat lodge ceremony at the Songhees First Nations facilitated by Greg Sam and Chubby. This unique learning experience exposed JIBC students to this culturally rich First Nations traditional ceremony. Here is how some learners describe their experience:



- *The sweat lodge is a ceremonial sauna and is a ritual part of the First Nations people. The sweat lodge is heated from hot rocks and then from what I observed sprinkled with water. There are four rounds in which we give thanks and honour to mother earth, women, men and yourself.*
- *I found the fourth stage the hardest out of all because it consisted of 20 rocks and this round I prayed for myself. I said “I will achieve my goal of becoming a Police Officer in the future where I protect and serve the community and others that need my assistance.*

The JIBC values applied learning. Here’s what the participants had to say about the impact of this field trip & experience:

- *The trip to the sweat lodge was definitely beneficial as it gave me a hands on experience where I got to actually see the culture and not just read about it in a book.*
- *This was one of the most interesting experiences that I have ever had. I learned a lot about the native culture and spirituality.*
- *The Sweat Lodge was an experience that I will remember for the rest of my life and will be considered the best field trip at the JIBC. From the day we went to our field trip my life dramatically changed just by going to the Sweat Lodge because it gave me more acceptance towards the Natives and made me learn more about their great culture.*
- *The biggest thing I learned after the Lodge experience is that, there are no differences between human beings; no matter if you are Chinese, Indian, and German or Aboriginal, we are all the same.*

In addition to the important applied educational aspect, these JIBC learners will be more culturally aware when they enter their professions.

- *It’s a great experience because it is important to understand diversity and it is important for our Police Officers to interact with other cultures to get a better understanding of it so we do not have to stereotype.*
- *Some people are reluctant to experience cultures not their own. Before taking this course, Law Enforcement in a Diverse Society, I was one of them.*

Mike Trump, Manager, Advanced Police Training and the Law Enforcement Studies Diploma at the JIBC was strategic in selecting his faculty and developing curriculum to address historic tensions between police and Aboriginal communities. Trump states, *“One of the benefits for students in the LESD program is that, not only do the instructors have the necessary academic*



background to teach at the post secondary level, but also have extensive experience in their subject matter area. Gary Green was a sergeant with the Victoria City Police for 30 years and served as the department's Aboriginal Liaison officer. Through those connections with the Aboriginal community, he knew that not only would the students need theoretical education surrounding issues of diversity, but they would need to experience the culture first hand to have a lasting impact. This is the second group to travel to Victoria to speak with a Native Elder and participate in a Sweat Lodge ceremony and the feedback from the students has been overwhelmingly positive.”

The JIBC's Centre for Aboriginal Programs and Services would like to acknowledge Mike Trump for offering this progressive course, Gary Green for seeing the pedagogical benefits involved in the sweat lodge, the students for their reflections and especially Greg Sam for guiding these students on this unique educational opportunity that will, ideally, result in safer communities when these learners go into law enforcement.

Written by Dr. Michelle LaFlamme