WWU Environmental Education Teaching Assistant

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Internship Title: _Teaching Assistant for Western Washington University Environmental Education Spring Block 2022_

Student Name: _Adelle Tower_


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STUDENT SIGNATURE _Adelle Tower_

DATE: _6/2/2022_
This quarter I was a teaching assistant for WWU’s Environmental Studies Department’s Education and Eco-Social Justice program field quarter. The quarter consists of four classes with the same group of educators and learners. Our experiential application this year was collaborating with WSANEC language revitalization school, Whiteswan environmental organization, and Waskowitz Environmental Learning and Service outdoor leadership program to create curriculum and cultivate community for our field trips.

My duties as a teaching assistant for this program were to facilitate student learning, to create prep work for instructions, give feedback to students, assist with administrative work, and the be available to help with any other needs. My learning objectives for being a teaching assistant were to learn how educational collaborations come to be from behind the scenes, how to facilitate reciprocal ways of learning within these collaborations, and how to provide culturally safe spaces. My last learning objective was to have a greater understanding of my leadership style.

From my observations of behind-the-scenes operations I’ve witnessed the amount of time folks had to commit to the development of the program, meeting after meeting, emails upon emails. Little details have a tendency to change throughout planning, if I ever get the opportunity to help with a collaboration in the future I’ll be sure to plan for flexibility around numbers of people and the materials needed for each individual. I will also note the amount of paperwork needed to be able to do these programs. Medical information, travel information, background checks, volunteer form, etc. My planner, labeling materials we were moving and having all necessary documents in one packet were some strategies used to try to stay organized.
From my observations of facilitating reciprocal ways of learning and on providing culturally safe spaces I’ve picked up some good skills. Such as the importance of looking to the elders/knowledge keepers of the collaborating communities to build upon the western education foundation that our lesson plans have. Another key component is creating a safe communicative space. Some ways to foster this is giving recognition/gratitude for people’s hard work and willingness to interact with one another, doing this can help folks feel valued and they will likely feel more comfortable voicing problems as they pop up. Setting boundaries before the collaborations take place is another way to create a safe communicative space. Some boundary examples could be using I statements in discussions, another could be for folks to not take photos and instead remain present.

Risk management is another element I got to experience during this internship, although it was not an explicit learning objective of mine. For this position I got Wilderness First Responder certified, a 5-day wilderness medicine training. While this training was incredible and useful (see week 2 of journal for big takeaways), but the ideal goal is for no one to need medical aid in the first place. Hence, risk management. Our field trips primarily took place on Sucia island and some of our risk management assessments included practicing cooking safety, staying single file on narrow trails, planning for wet weather, practicing leave no trace, the buddy system and much more. Applying risk management looks like setting clear boundaries and expectations. It also means having a system in place for when folks don’t follow these rules and may end up with an injury or near miss.

Prior to this internship my experience with teaching had only been executing curriculum and lesson plans. During this internship my teaching role was more focused on supporting budding teachers, and our learning was rooted in place or in the land. When I previously heard the term land-based learning my brain always went to taking opportunities that pop up within the landscape as a learning opportunity, I also envisioned using all of the senses to cue into what we chose to learn about and reflect on how we can learn from this natural element. Land based learning is this, but it is also goes beyond these principles. After this internship land-based learning to me means incorporating oneself into the lessons. What I mean by this is acknowledging our own relations to the natural elements we are learning from, themes of reciprocity and the importance of our stewardship and interconnectedness with the land. I’m unsure if land-based education can be a leadership style but the key purposes of it are qualities I try to be conscious to incorporate into how I interact with the world.
Self-Evaluation Section:

Overall, I believe I meet my goals and in return had an incredible experience being a teaching assistant for spring block. I fulfilled all of my expected duties. I was able to provide a mediating space for students to express their needs, I gave feedback on lessons plans and curriculum building, and assisted in any other capacity required of me. My feedback from the students was mostly positive. It seems I was strong in my organization skill and the students knew I was available for support and care when needed. Areas of improvement included taking a step back from checking in with folks as it could come off as micromanaging. I see the value in this critique, I may have come off strong to come folks. Compared to the students I felt like I was doing too little, it was difficult for me to remain as a supportive role the whole time.
**WEEKLY JOURNAL LOG**

**Week 1**

First day activities were lively and thought provoking of leadership applications. When leading one of the activities I tried to leave room for ambiguity allowing the role of the facilitator to be active in encouraging greater reflection and participation. The blindfold activity was neat & really highlighted the importance and safety in asking for help, a practice that will be used over and over again during spring block. Second day of class I really appreciated the hopes & fears activity. I enjoyed the anonymity because people talked about mental health concerns which are a bit harder to talk about without that space of privacy. The planting seeds while we read the hopes and fears aloud was powerful. It felt both grounding and validating. In addition to looking forward for the plant to grow along with us. Due to getting wilderness First Responder trained I did not attend class thursday nor the first 5 day trip to Sucia Island. My first day of WFR training we ran a couple scenarios covering basic life support & SOAP notes for patients. We also got CPR & AED training. It was neat to meet my fellow classmates, most are in an outdoor leadership program to become guides in the outdoors. I was able to get good food, gas & travel route recommendations. The second day of WFR training we spent did a deep wound cleaning & imputed objects lab on a pigs foot. A bit grotesque but educational. Then we continued to run scenarios, practicing BLS, SOAP notes and Splints for a handful of common injuries. We were supposed to do epi injection training but it was moved to next week so students would have an easier time crossing the pass with a winter storm warning issued.
Week 2

I was able to attend Thursday's class via zoom. Vivian presented her CUNAT topic of birds of prey. I really appreciated the use of bird calls & the physical handouts of talons to create a picture of the animals. It was also interesting having the audience shout out what they associated with Bald Eagles & then transitioning to the cultural history aspects. Nick led us through pronunciation tools from our partner school. I am really excited to keep practicing, it's an honor to learn some of the first names of the plants & life around me. It also is showing respect & effort for our partner school.

The third day of WFR training we started w/ epinephrine training & learned more extremity splinting. We practiced a scenario that included these new skills & focused a bit more on environmental caused distress rather than trauma. The fourth day of WFR training we practiced the various ways of evacuating patients that cannot self-evac. I got to carry a student around, in a litter, with my other classmates around the campus there. We also transitioned to practicing/assessing medical caused distress. On the last day of WFR training we practiced hypothermia packaging & more ways to evac patients. We also did our last scenario, a mass casualty scenario.

I was a patient in this drill. Here are some of the big takeaways from this course:

- It will be chaotic + messy in real life
- Don't forget about patients
- Improvisation works
- Triage + prioritization is effective
- Creativity is a must
- Stay focused + prioritize your patient
- Teamwork is key
- Use PAST + SOAP process
- Pt. can feel taken care of amid chaos
- Communicate urgency effectively
- Trust training
- Slew is smooth & smooth is fast
- Once stable, pts, there is time
- Don't get too emotionally invested
Week 3

Back to class this week! I felt pretty disoriented but have been putting the pieces together. I added the assignment description & annotated our students' reflective journals w/ Kathryn. Reading their journals gave me an idea of what I had missed, which was nice. This week I also talked w/ some students about how staff can show up for students' emotional needs. We talked about not needing a full explanation in order to provide support or accommodations. We also went over some of the potential trauma students could have been going through & why it’s important to offer support while also setting boundaries.

Other than that the students have been cultivating schedules for our Seattle trip next week & for our Second Trip to Suva Island, in addition to curriculum for our second Suva visit. My reflections from this week are to prioritize students’ mental health needs & that modeling community is a great preventative measure for against poor mental & emotional health moments.

Week 4

We are on our Seattle trip! We met the WBLs students & classroom. Did lots of get to know you activities. Honorable mentions: back to back to keep focus, passing moving rings is fun. The tide was lower today & we found sea cucumbers, crabs, clams, & many other critters on our short field trip. Second day in Seattle we lost some students in the morning due to physical & emotional needs. The group I was with visited a food forest in South Seattle. It was beautiful. There were interpretive signs written in 5 languages, seed sharing, food boxes, plots, community plots, individual plots, & a community-based international area. They had green posts next to the community food that was ripe or in-season in bags for gathering. We met up with the rest of our class & shared what we learned from our field trips, it sounded like the other group had observed that the spaces they visited although public, catered to a particular group of people (white people in this case) greater than other groups. These conclusions arose w/ witnessing the security efforts were race-oriented. Wednesday students looked over feedback from curriculum & lesson plan drafts.
All of the content & instruction looked great! Behavior/curriculum management could be a struggle for this group as I didn’t see much mention of it. Organizational, the students are adding too many overly complicated objective goals. I’m looking forward to watching their growth! Thursday class I missed but it was finalizing Suju schedules & meal planning. Friday no class! Just preparing for Monday’s departure.

**Week 5**
We’ve made it to Suo! The boat ride out was peaceful. I sat out on the bow the entire time; we saw a couple harbor seals, some seagull eagles & of course, the beautiful (mostly calm) water. We arrived & unloaded. I took the boat w/ the park ranger to set up camp ahead of this group. Gene & I took a walk to the other group to get disinfectant that we left. On the trail I saw some frogs, snails & interesting madrones & yews. Turkey tail & learned some cool anatomy of salmonberries. I’m very grateful to be out here, what a wonderful way to learn.

** Cicada lesson**
- eye contact for listening
- more use of specific questions & yes other than verbal
- consent conversation
- first aid scenario considerations: safety, hazards, immediacy of action
- basic life support: causes (medical or environmental) and evacuation
- allergies, past medical history, pre-existing conditions
- food & water consumption, memory of events
- more visual scenarios before scenarios
- (all talking)
- choosing groups
- in future potentially major bleeds & splits at scenarios since they were relevant
- using the environment for treatment, sticks for splints, boiling uncooked water, foraging, using excess clothing
- conclusion as to purpose & main takeaways

**Olivia**
- leave no trace for future generations, respect for the thing itself
It's like but I want to write now because I'm smelling my gratitude. I've been struggling a bit on this trip, I've let my mind go down anxiety spirals a few times over literally nothing. Somewhat that have 3% of happening. I'm proud of myself for pushing through & referring back to breathwork & affirmations for guidance. Because of my efforts, I attended a salmon bake w/ WUSANES & LUMMI nation (not all members of course), my body is buzzing happily from the warmth of fire & connection being built tonight. Even w/ my poor memory, I'll never forget tonight.
week lesson #2

   - Angela: How does the world exchange this lesson?

2. Goal: World's health exchanges into position.
   - Angela: How does the world exchange this lesson?

   - Angela: How does the world exchange this lesson?

   - Angela: How does the world exchange this lesson?

5. Goal: World's health exchanges into position.
   - Angela: How does the world exchange this lesson?

   - Angela: How does the world exchange this lesson?

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    - Angela: How does the world exchange this lesson?

18. Goal: World's health exchanges into position.
    - Angela: How does the world exchange this lesson?

    - Angela: How does the world exchange this lesson?

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    - Angela: How does the world exchange this lesson?
**Week 6**

This week was preparation for our last trip to Sucia. Students planned & prepped food, lessons & gifts for our partner school, Simmonds. It & our guests from Lummi Nation. On the first week, one of the children was sick with covid. I had the opportunity to help students collaborate between the food, lesson planning & gifts group. Almost as much on my end this week though. I gave some verbal feedback on curriculum & scheduling but since I haven’t worked with these partners before I felt not equipped to give much guidance.

**Week 7**

First day back to Sucia was pretty intense, moving gear, setting up, cooking & cleaning for 60 people. It was exhausting. On top of that I feel emotionally poorer, our students aren’t sufficiently being recognized for their work. Goals for the trip:

- There is also stress around food since we were told there would be 10 ppl less than there is. At least we have gotten the opportunity to be here, to witness inter-community collaboration firsthand & hopefully heal a bit of inter-generational trauma.

Also, off topic: we saw J-red Oscar!
Second day, folks are more settled & appreciation/recognition was given. We did Jessica's Cornshuck lessons today. For Cornshuck lesson, we walked Lawson's bluff, in search of evidence of other peoples. We found their seat, train & even a full skull! I also learned about Sitka spruce & chocolate lilies. Jessica's lesson on the circle of life was fun; there was good reflection around emotional support systems & it connected to the salmon life cycle, interconnectedness. Later in the evening, I saw a river otter, played games w/ the little humans, we learned more about our campground, likely the ancestors of our friends w/ us. Lummi is now talking to an abundance of officials on next steps. In the evening, campfire, singing & dancing.

Third day, we got to a late start. Amara took a group to Evang cave. I didn't get to observe their lesson. I took another group to geese drop point. It's storming today. An abundance of grizzly bears showed up, but valuable stroller. Lummi has a better idea of what ceremonial & bureaucratic practices will be happening w/ the remains discovered. Katelyn's tent broke in the wind so now I have a tent mate. Some things I got to witness & learn today: 3rd, the soul of the new moon is full moon & the dance (1 of 12), a sacred ceremony to honor the remains found, making devil's club into beads & a story related to lime, how to make fishhead soup. My heart is full of laughter & creating connections both w/ my students & w/ our partners. Lummi's mission, my heart is full of new knowledge & my soul is bearing will to keep exploring what I've found on this trip.

Last moments on Sue's, closing circle included many medicine reflections appointments for one another. Our goodbyes before embarking on the next home was wise, but we managed.
Week 9

Tuesdays class we shared our reflections from our latest trip to Sweden & went over basics for our upcoming trip. Wednesday we did trip logistics/drivers schedule, ferry tickets, gear check-in. We collected journals which I read through & left comments. Thursday class Katelyn & I worked on editing a reading document for the classes as entertainment/resource for activities. I took out everything but grounding activities & plant ID keys that's the interests I've heard from folks. I added 3 stories from an emergence magazine & a map of salt spring island. Nick added history & Gene added some chapters from underground.

1st 9 After crossing the border, catching a ferry & driving we arrived at salt spring island. After today I wish we had class Friday & talked about/illustrate advice for solo backpacking/camping. I also think our short field trip to the restoration site should have been added to another day, an additional stop is the last thing I wanted to do after 9 hrs travel. The first morning of schools I awoke, gathered my gear & sprinkles & took off for a wander. My goals was to photograph small beings along the way & orient myself to this place. I was also noticing good spaces to be, whether for meditation or reading or attempts to connect. I got some good photos, saw many deer including little ones, & began reading "What kind of ancestor do you want to be?". After finishing part one I returned to camp & made lunch. I'm having tricky eyes & body so I think it's the grass around here. I finished a book about Hygge then went to wander around the other half of the property. I ran into Nick & checked in if I was supposed to be moving around. I am not, which I understand but it makes me sad. My favorite activities in nature are foraging, following animal tracks while keeping an eye out for bones, as well as just wandering. Observing the world while moving through it. Now I'm thinking how I should've brought more books. I'm gonna be out of material by tomorrow lunch. The rest of the evening was dinner & bedtime. Also, I saw an owl. 2nd morning I woke up after dawn, now knowing I gotta be here made me prioritize sleep as a way to fill time.
It's nice to move at a slower pace too though. I ate breakfast & set up my hammock for later use. I took my tea - poetry book & read poems to a couple Cedar trees in exchange for protection from the rain. Then I returned to my hammock & finished "What kind of Ancestors do you want to be?". As I was on the last couple pages Gene brought me "Saanich Ethnobotany" & I requested it. I read through that and learned a few new things but I'm always surprised by how much I already knew. Lunch now, the sun is beginning to peek out every ten minutes or so. I returned to the tent that the periodic sun has made warm inside. This and my aching back lured me to lay down for a few hours, not sleeping, just breathing, & peace. It's evening now. I've done some minor preparation for leaving tomorrow afternoon; then I played, practiced handstands, stretched, climbed trees + logs, hung upside down for a while. Next was dinner & heading to bed after writing a some more poems.

Last morning of Solo I just ate & packed. I had time to spare so I carved a snake out of wood - all the blackies bought stuffies but I didn't want one so this is my substitute. I told them I'd make. Now we are circled up together & journaling to the prompt: "What was surprising/unexpected in your relationship to this place. This isn't necessarily related to my. " " " " but I was surprised by how many different kinds of birds I saw. Here some pictures of my time.

**Bragging:** After ending solo we got lunch, showered @ a pool & set up camp in Victoria. The next day we joined WSAMEC for morning protocol. Beginning the morning w/ singing & dancing was incredible. It was great to see some students again. After protocol we visited Victoria. we went
to a maritime museum & a bookstore where I picked up some good educational books. Next stop was a large camas patch along the coast. An archeologist came & shared the historical significance of the land we were on. He painted a picture of how the WSANEC people tended the camas patches & lived in the areas. He did a wonderful job explaining the importance of these archaeological sites & their goals for the future of these sites. The evening we got dinner & saw a theatre show. Saturday was a travel day.