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# News from Acadia, american student, 1ere L 2008 in our Lycée.

- Archives du Blog - Que sont-ils devenus ? -

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## **My year in France was difficult, full of challenges, but looking back I see it as an overwhelmingly wonderful achievement !**

My experience of living in France vastly outshone my last year of high-school upon my return home to Maine. Thanks to several kind and supportive teachers, I was able to take many writing and art classes, the two things that I was passionate about at the time. With their aid, and the help of good friends, I was able to get through a difficult year of "re-entry" into America !

## **I am currently a second year student at Hampshire College, which is based in Amherst, Massachusetts.**

Hampshire is a liberal-arts college which puts an emphasis on students creating their own path using the structure of the College itself. Hampshire is surrounded by 4 colleges, two all-womens colleges : Smith College and Mount Holyoke College, and also two of the oldest colleges in America : Amherst College and the University of Massachusetts. Hampshire itself was created in the 1960's or 70's (in fact, it is my mother's alma mater !) and **it allows students to create their own curriculum (under the supervision of 2 faculty members of their choice) from all classes offered through all 5 colleges.**

My "freshman" year was a time of turmoil, as I did not know what I had come to college intending to study, and was initially placed in classes that were completely unfamiliar to me and which I had little interest in. Often, I had difficulties with the methods of teaching ; Hampshire emphasizes class discussion, however, some teachers utilize this method much more effectively than others. I was lucky enough to have the perfect roommate, who became a best friend and who supported me through my (at times) intense unhappiness with Hampshire and its faculty (funnily enough, she has since transferred to a more normal school !).

But the latter half of my first year was much better. I took two incredibly interesting but difficult courses : "The Politics of Pop Culture" (in America) and "Culture, Religion, and Environmentalism", and worked more hours at the job I have here in Amherst, which is at **the National Yiddish Book Center, a fascinating organization devoted to preserving the Yiddish language - it houses 6 million books, and many amazing programs.**

Here is their link if you are interested : [the National Yiddish Book Center](#).

## **Now I am in my second year at Hampshire, and everything has changed**

Over the summer I stayed in Amherst to work, and to figure out what I needed. I realized that I needed to make more connections with my teachers, get off campus, and get serious and figure out exactly what I wanted to study. Currently, I live off-campus rather than in the dorms, and have become much more comfortable navigating through the 5 College system. I'm taking 5 classes : "Rethinking Security in the Age of Climate Change", "Environmental Justice in the Age of Climate Change" (both at Hampshire), and at the other colleges : "Native Americans 1500-present", "Indigenous Peoples and Law" (my personal favorite !) and "Contemporary Issues of Native

Americans in Society"

## **My project will focus on Native Americans and environmental justice.**

In other words, I am studying the U.S. laws over Native American land and bodies, and the effects they have had in categorizing and isolating Native Americans from the public sphere and aid. I seek to understand the contradictions inherent in laws said to "protect" Native Americans, but which obviously further disparity and perpetuate racist colonial and imperialist attitudes of governance. The bottom line is that **through law (e.g. land treaties) Native Americans have been forced onto some of the worst land in the U.S. where they have no congressional representation, and where the highest levels of poverty, the highest mortality, the highest rates of illiteracy in the United States are found.**

All this to say, throughout colonial America, Native Americans have been one of the voiceless groups repeatedly harmed within an entirely inhumane yet legally correct framework, which continues to persist throughout action and discourse, both governmental, anthropological, and scientific, etc. Representation of Native Americans has not progressed beyond the 18th century, and the ability of Native peoples to adapt and yet still maintain Native identity and therefore culturally inherent rights, such as the right to self-sovereignty or self-determination.

Long story short, currently I am focusing on how simplistic representations (or tropes) of indigenous peoples have been used for and against the cause of achieving more sovereignty in the face of global climate change legislation (both by the media, and indigenous peoples themselves). This is all very anthropological and environmental at the moment, but eventually I will delve more into the legal sphere (as intimidatingly complicated as that may be !).

## **As for future plans, in the Fall, I would be traveling in Nicaragua,**

with a program called ICADS, which gives students the chance to immerse themselves in the local culture and the Spanish language, while learning about environmental science and working on sustainable development projects (two of my favorite things !) in local Nicaraguan communities.

The program will allow me to accomplish my long term goal of learning Spanish, while also gaining a better understanding of how communities can rebuild their towns more sustainably utilizing environmental science.

## **I do try to keep in touch with my friends and family from France,**

as they are some of the most wonderful people and best friends I've ever made. It is hard to keep up contact though, as everyone's lives continue to change and grow further apart, and I seem to keep getting busier and busier, and college gets more and more expensive each year so travel becomes out of the question ! I've tried to arrange visits to France countless times, but they all seem to fall through... but **I know I'll be back eventually... I really did leave a bit of my heart there !**