

ECOHEALTH APPROACH AS A PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY CARE

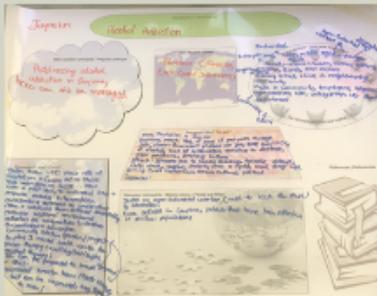
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Advanced Topics in Environment & Health (ENVS 4800A) with Dr. Martin Bunch

This course took place at York's eco campus in Costa Rica during reading week of winter semester in 2020. The principles of eco health approach are transdisciplinarity, systems thinking, multi-stakeholder participation, sustainability, social and gender equity, and knowledge to action. We learnt in this course by doing, so one of our main and final deliverable was a proposal for IDRC, for an intervention, informed by eco health approach, on an issue of our choice.

About My Proposal

My proposal was on a pilot project to address alcoholism in Success, Guyana. Since this was a short but intensive course, there were several course components to help us grasp and internalize the key concepts of the approach. These included site visits to various community members & projects doing work rooted in these concepts, a group project and guest lectures among others.



Importance



As a psychology major, I am deeply interested in ideas of wellness that acknowledges an individual's place in society and its effects on their wellbeing instead of just looking at the individual in isolation. This would involve intersectional and anti-oppressive lens but I only had an introductory understanding of what these concepts involve in practice. The key concepts of this approach provided an opportunity to briefly explore and think more deeply about what steps might be involved in addressing a health issue with care and respect. For instance, multi-stakeholder participation to me shares ideas of anti-oppression.

Learnings



This course was a lesson in a process and practice of doing community work with care. It was a lesson in collaboration where I had an opportunity to reframe and even rethink various ideas such as doing work WITH people instead of FOR people. It was a lesson in appreciation for myself, the work and ideas that I value and an opportunity to live and work in ease.

Moving forward and Advice

I now actively seek work in spaces that indicates value for these principles as I have a clearer understanding of what they look like in practice and I hope to continue my graduate studies in community psychology. I encourage my fellow students to take advantage of experiential education because its nature of teaching by doing has helped me to question more, critically think and actively learn. These opportunities always surprise me since I've always ended them with my mindset a bit shifted. They always leave lasting impacts.

