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Weekly Journal: 4

Just like that, I have finished my fourth week here in the Pacific Northwest and am half ways through my internship this summer. It is strange to consider how fast time passes when you are constantly learning new things and creating new experiences. After spending another day at Pack Forest, we departed back to the University of Washington, Seattle to spend the rest of our week. We were allowed a free weekend and I decided to take advantage of my nearby location to Canada and headed to Vancouver for the weekend!

During our last day at Pack Forest, we met up with Dr. Benjamin Dittbrenner, who is Executive Director of Beavers Northwest. Ben presented us with his research and conservation work regarding beavers in the Puget Sound and Skykomish River watershed. It was highly surprising to realize the profound impacts beavers had towards the ecosystem as keystone species. In addition, Ben presented to us some hydrology methods, which was new to me and interested me a lot. With this, we proceeded to a stream and practiced data collection to understand basic stream ecology and to analyze the use of benthic macro invertebrates as indicators of stream quality. Being presented to hydrology allowed me to expand on my interests and perhaps consider a similar career type in the future.

Back in Seattle, we visited the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center and the Duwamish River Coalition to learn about the story of Seattle's native people and how they are working to preserve the river that was an important part of their cultural development. It is highly unfortunate that the Duwamish tribe is not federally recognized, considering their place in history. Moreover, we utilized an environmental justice mapping exercise designed by the EPA, allowing me to comprehend the extent to which minorities and low-income communities are often located in areas with the most hazardous materials and poor air quality. In many areas, people are far more prone to suffer from asthma and many other health issues. Additionally, we met with PhD candidate Rochelle Kelly who is investigating patterns of population connectivity among bat species in a naturally fragmented landscape to comprehend their vulnerability to habitat fragmentation. Surprisingly, bats are playing ecological roles that are vital to the health of natural ecosystems and human economies. During a "bat night", we were able to observe many bats and understand their physical characteristics. Furthermore, we visited instructor Dr. Chenjerai Kumanyika to help us develop our conservation stories. Dr. Chenjerai was one of the most interesting persons I have met so far and whose scholarly work brings to light the need for a more critical analysis of issues of justice in popculture and the media. We also met with Dr. Carolyn Finney, who was an amazing and well recognized person. Her research explores how identity, representation, and power play a significant role in determining how people negotiate their daily lives in relation to the environment. After an intense and insightful week, I headed out

to the beautiful British Columbia to spend my weekend exploring and trying new things to eat, something that I would have not expected a few months ago!

I have come to conclude that even if I am extremely happy when I am outdoors, I have a lot of enjoyment being in the city and seeing new faces on a daily basis. I also have a huge interest in analyzing and learning about both the hard sciences and social/environmental justice issues. Meeting passionate and impactful people have formed and shaped a foundational form of knowledge that I did not possess before. In order to help my community, I must be aware of all of the barriers and forms of power that could conflict with and undermine it.

