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Auto-Geography Reflection Paper

I never realized how much I didn't know or take to heart about myself until I started working on this project. When I first sat down to start working on my scrapbook, I really struggled to pull together ideas of what I was going to include. "Where do I begin explaining my life?" I kept asking myself. Well, after days of scratching my head and pondering, I finally realized, "at the beginning of course!" From there, I went through all of my junk drawers, old boxes in the storage room, and even the ancient photo albums and came across treasures I had kept all this time and forgotten about. I even called my mom and asked for the stories behind some of the pictures I found from my childhood. I was absolutely astounded I had so many stories to tell, and so many life experiences I have under my belt.

While cutting out pieces of paper, selecting stickers, gluing on decorations and finally starting to assemble my scrapbook, it dawned on me that my colleagues were going to see this. I began thinking, "you know, I'm not comfortable with people having an insider's view of my personal life" but I realized that these are people that I'm going to be working with all year and in the future; we all have our own experiences, good and bad. They are also not just "people". We are future colleagues and friends I haven't made just quite yet and we're all going to be in the same boat at the end of this. And because of that, I wanted to depict a realistic and true survey of all of everything that makes me who I am.

For my project, I began with explain where my name comes from and who I see myself as (a daughter, sister, friend, Christian, mentor, musician, student and future teacher). Next I wanted to express the most important part of who made me who I am today, which is my family. They are the loves of my life, my rock in times of hardship and the people that support me through everything. I found some of my favourite photos and labeled them in the scrapbook. I also happened across a letter that I wrote to myself in grade 8 that was put in a time capsule that I was allowed to open in grade 12. I thought it was a great representation of who I was as a child and what I dreamed of becoming through my high school journey. Next I found some amazingly embarrassing school photo identification cards that I had kept at the bottom of my junk drawer which serve as a neat look of "evolution" through school. It's fun to see how my style changed each year too. From there, I took a few of my favourite photos from my old photo album of each stage of transition in school that included my prom photo with my closest friends, my high school graduation photo and awards, my graduation photo from Capilano University and finally my Bachelor of Music ceremony from last year.

In regards to artifacts, I pulled out pieces that were significant to me, including my pieces that represented the first time I had considered music as a career, the piece of writing I had published, the first time I knew I wanted to be a writer, my horribly ugly business card and first official name tag. I even found the reference letter that my teacher had written for my university applications all those years ago.

To represent the people who have made huge contributions to my life, I added a page of influential people to my scrapbook. I included my childhood friends, my nieces, my grandparents, my mom, my teachers and my best friend that I later fell in love with. This page meant the world to me because each picture represented holds memories and moments that changed my life in some way and are memories that I cherish and hold very dear to my heart.

Other trinkets I found and included in my scrapbook were ticket stubs to concerts I've attended that I found in the junk drawer and wow were there a lot! But I realized that I kept them because each concert moved my emotions in some way, inspired the musician in me and influenced my musical compositions and aspirations.

Finally I moved onto who I am today. I found a letter and photograph from my former students thanking me for being their teacher (yay!), a picture from the first day of school in the Bachelor of Education program this year, my student teacher identification card and Killarney crest from my practicum school (which is also my former high school). I also added some of my favourite photographs I've taken to represent my love of photography, a couple of photos of my artwork that I do on the side as my hobby, a picture of my driver's licence I earned two weeks ago, and more pictures of my friends and family. I also included my certificate of Baptism to represent that I am a practicing Christian and the love that I have for my church (I'm now a worship leader and band director at Westside Church downtown). Furthermore, there are plane tickets from my trips around the world, and pictures of me laughing (something I do everyday).

And of course, my scrapbook wouldn't be complete without a page dedicated to my love of music. It is who I am, who I strive to be and how I connect with the world. I found old music programs that I participated in, my bio from a concert I played in as a professional musician, a thank you letter for a concert I played in for a Filipino rockstar (that was an amazing experience!) and pictures of my boyfriend and I playing music together (which is how we met and later fell in love).

Last but not least, I added a section in my scrapbook to represent my future. I wasn't sure how to represent this seeing as it hasn't happened yet. So after thinking for ages and ages, I decided to represent it in a collage format of words and phrases. These words and phrases are things that I hope to achieve in my future, such as love, family, music, comfort, discovery, dream, travel and blessings. Other words I chose reflected things I want to change in myself for the future such as needing to stand up for myself, plan for the future, redemption, and liberating myself from things in my past that have hindered my growth so far. All I know is that I want to be a better person, continue my music, have my family at the center of what I hold dear and enjoy life and what it has in stock for me. I love that I have no idea what's next and living in the moment is what I thrive on.

As a future educator, I have learned that everyone's life experience is different. I even witnessed this when I was walking around the room and looking at everyone's project: no two people had the same journey or same stories. I find that fascinating and I love to hear where people have been, what they've been through, where they are now and what they want for the future. I want to encourage my students to be different and unique, after all, it's our experiences that make us who we are and shape who we want to be. From my own project, I've learned that I have so many memories and different experiences in so many areas! I love that I've tried so many different things, even if I was horrible at them. At least I have a story to tell and I enjoy the fact that I can laugh at myself. It has also given me something to look forward to and things to continuously improve on. I actually would love to work this project into my own curriculum in the future. I want to really get to know my students and I think that sharing our stories helps to create a positive environment and make connections with one another.

When sharing my scrapbook, I was lucky enough to sit with people from my own cohort. And as we went around in a circle, I realized that I've known most of them for so long, but I never really *knew* them. It was such an eye opening experience being able to get to know each in a different light. Even this last week I've noticed that there's a different vibe between all of us and I think we all agree that we feel much closer to one another, which is absolutely amazing. How many other people can say that? So, from the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you for such a fantastic semester, a super fun class, great projects and overall making us realize we're human, which some of us (myself included) had lost sight of. I know I'll be a better person and a better teacher because of this class.