

During spring break of my sophomore year of college, I had the unique opportunity to travel to Crow Agency, Montana with fellow UW-L students and spend a week on the Crow Native American reservation. My expectation of the experience was that we would simply be spending our days at the local elementary school, interacting and tutoring the students who attended Pretty Eagle Catholic Academy. Needless to say, this experience surpassed my expectations in so many ways. Not only did I grow personally and spiritually, but also I was able to learn about, live in, and fully envelop in a unique culture that was different from my own. During the week, we interacted with vibrant Native American students and teachers, had dinner with natives and learned about their genealogy and connection to the Crow culture, and explored the sacred grounds of the reservation and the history that has occurred there. Each had a profound impact and allowed me the opportunity to grow and gain a new cultural perspective. From the Crow people, I learned that despite tribulation and being challenged for what you believe, you should remain strong in your values and lineage, and advocate for who you are. I also learned how to be a genuinely welcoming individual to anyone you meet. The Crow people treat everyone they meet like family and it was enlightening to feel the warmth of this culture and for them to know that, despite governmental regulations, we hold them in the highest regards and see them as gracious individuals who welcomed complete strangers onto their land and showed us tremendous hospitality. I also learned to have pride in my culture and have the enthusiasm to share it with others, as the Crow people did for us. They generously let us tour their holy land, fully engaged us in their religious practices, and showed us what it means to have incredible pride in your culture. I believe that we, too, were able to share with them a perspective from our culture. We showed

them the upmost respect when listening to the Crow history, attending their religious services, and learning about what life is like on the reservation. We were appreciative of the time they took to talk with us and we gave them a gift of our appreciation after each gathering, returning the graciousness that they showed us. The following couple of years after our visit, we were still writing letters back and forth to each other, signifying our value of friendship and connection to them. In these ways, we were able to represent and show the warmth of our cultural and values, while learning about theirs. I will always remember our time with the Crow people; my first of hopefully many cross-cultural experiences.