

New Zealand Journal Postings

May 20 – 30, 2010

Day 1: Our day started off great, we were on time; until we our plane was delayed for 2 hours. In the mean time we were able to do our Maori myth/legend presentations. Thanks to Ashton, we have a traveling companion named Captain Jack. We arrived in Vegas, and were rushed into our next flight to LAX. Some of us were very saddened because we were feeling lucky that day and wanted to gamble. But as luck would have it, one person got sick on the plane and another left her coat. Once in LA we checked in to Air New Zealand. In LA we had dinner and mingled around the airport for about 4 hours, by this time everyone was exhausted. Overall, it was a great long day.

Day 2: Here we are sitting on Air New Zealand plane, we began to notice the different accents of the people around us including the flight attendants. Everyone was so friendly and courteous. We had blankets, pillows, and headphones included in our flight purchase. Dinner was offered a couple of hours later, most of us chose to stay up to try out the food, while others chose to sleep instead. Then around 4 AM breakfast was served, while we were flying over the ocean and looking out the window watching the sunrise.

Day 3: It is now 6:30 AM on Saturday May 22, 2010 in New Zealand. This would be 12:30 PM for our friends and family back in Texas. We all managed to make it through customs and bio-security without any difficulties. While we were at the airport waiting for Gordon our new friendly bus driver. We exchanged currency, bought phone cards and coffee! Our next stop was Whangarei, where we had an awesome lunch and Cara's favorite hokey pokey ice-cream. Back on the bus headed to Paihia, we noticed the how beautiful the scenery is here. Everywhere you turn there are beautiful trees, mountains, and ocean views. Even out at our lovely hotel Aloha Inn window. We went to the grocery store and bought supplies for the next couple of days. Currently we are in our room enjoying Champagne ham sandwiches, noddles, and fruits. The overall New Zealand atmosphere has been amazing and breathtaking. Now it's 7:20 PM New Zealand time, 2:18 AM back home; time for bed. Good Night!!

Hello to all of our family and friends, we are having the time of our lives in beautiful New Zealand. Every day is a new experience and new opportunities to learn more about this wonderful country and the people who live here. Today we got to sleep in late and only had to get up at 8. It was drizzling rain when we got started on our way to the Waitangi (wa-tang-e) Treaty Grounds. It was a short ride on the bus and Gordon our coach (bus) driver was excellent like he has been this trip so far. We arrived at the treaty grounds at about 10am and were greeted by our tour guide, sorry folks not a one of us can pronounce or even remember his name but he was a very intriguing Maori man and he knew a lot about the history of his people. We all took a picture together at the beginning of the tour (see pictures). For all of you that don't know the treaty grounds it is the site where the Maori people signed a treaty with the British government. To this day the interpretation of the document is still being debated and there are two copies of it, one in English and one in Maori. In general this document guarantees the right of both Maori and non-Maori citizens in New Zealand. This would be kind of like our constitution in the U.S. We got to see a real life waka (Maori canoe) that can hold up to 140 people and it was constructed in 1940 for the 100th anniversary of the signing of the treaty as well as a te whare runanga (gathering house). We then got to view a documentary type video more details of the Maori culture, the treaty, and life for Maori the people today. Following that we went to a wonderful Italian restaurant in Piahia and we tried a variety of pizza and pastas. And if that's not enough, guess what folks we went shopping. We had a choice to stay and shop in Piahia or take a ferry to a town called Russell. Souvenirs style for all you spectacular people back home that we love and adore and so wish were with us on adventure. We will write more tomorrow and we hope you enjoy the pictures.

May 23, 2010

We started our day early this morning! We were all ready to meet our bus by 7:00 AM!!! While we were waiting we had a beautiful view of the sunrise from our hotel. Shortly after we were greeted by Sir Barry from Fullers Great Sights. We went to pick up more people who were staying in different hotels in the Bay of Islands. We had people from all over the world on our bus, we had a lady from Australia, a lady from Taiwan, a lady from Hong Kong, a man from Germany, a man from England, a couple from India and two other Americans, one from New

York and the other from California.

We began our 12 hour tour at Haruru Falls, when we passed this location early in the morning the tide was low and by the time we made our way back at the end of the day the tide was high. Barry said by tomorrow this location will be flooded because of all the rain. The next stop on our tour took us to the Puketi Kauri Forest. This place was BEAUTIFUL!!!! We had never been to a forest before so this was a new experience for Irma and myself. Barry told us on the bus before we got off about the legend of the Kauri tree...if you hug the Kauri tree within 24 hours you will feel full of energy and will be refreshed! The Puketi Kauri Forest covers 15,000 hectares, of which contains 7,000 hectares of New Zealand's largest Kauri trees.

During our tour we saw a lot of beautiful scenery along the road, such as green hills, mountains by the sea side, country scenery, horses, cows, sheep and some pony's. Barry provided us with historic details about all the different places we would see. Barry really wanted us to get to our outdoor destinations before the rain storm hit. He did a good job with getting us to our different locations before the rain got heavy.

Our next stop was at the ninety mile beach. We literally drove up right next to the Tasman Sea. We drove right along side the waves for about an hour. It was unreal! At one point Barry was driving us straight forward and if we didn't know any better we thought we were going to drive right into the Sea! However Barry turned left and he explained to us that the Government here in New Zealand considers the beach a highway but the tour buses are the only vehicles that have insurance to drive a long the Sea. Barry informed us of many mythical stories, historical facts and points of interest.

Before we left the ninety mile beach, Barry took us to the Te Paki quick sand stream. He knew exactly how to drive in the quick sand so our bus would not sink! While we were there he showed us a car that had sunk 5 years ago because the person driving it didn't know how to drive in the sand so their car sank straight into the sand. At this location we were given the chance to get off the bus and go the Sea and take pictures for about 10 minutes. After we got back on the bus Barry drove us to the sand dunes. Here is were you had the chance to go sandboarding if you wanted to. Laura, Ashton, Jennifer, Catherine and Jacklyn sandboarded down the dunes while the rest of us watched and took pictures!

Our next stop was at Cape Reinga Lighthouse. We personally feel like the story Barry

told us before we arrived was the best story he told us all day. (Even though all of his stories were great...this by far was the best!) He told us that if any of us had ever lost a loved one in our lives that this was a very spiritual place where the Maori believe that the spirits go before they take their final trip into the spirit world. It's a very spiritual place to visit. He told us that if we had ever lost a loved one before and we didn't have the chance to say the things we wanted to say this was a good time to tell them how we feel. Barry even shared with us the story of his son passing away and how after many years he visited Cape Reinga and told his son everything he wanted him to know and finally let himself release all the guilt he had been carrying with him for years. Barry told us that about 4 nights after he visited Cape Reinga he had dreams about his son that seemed so real, he said he could literally smell his son in his dreams and that they were so real he didn't want to wake up. This really touched us because we have all lost loved ones in our lives and it was nice to know that we were able to be in a place that allowed us to feel connected with them again. It was raining pretty heavy at this point while we were visiting Cape Reinga but it was so worth it because we were able to also see where the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean meet. One half of the sea was green and the other was blue...it was the most beautiful thing to experience. On one of the plaques by the lighthouse it said that this is where the male and female parts of the sea come together as one...blue and green. This also seems like it would be a great place to get married to since the meaning of marriage is man and wife coming together as one. Irma also never thought she would make it up and down the hill but she made it!!! Even though it was a wet experience it was an amazing experience! :)

Our second to last stop was the Ancient Kauri Kingdom. They had some of New Zealand's finest furniture, arts and crafts made from a resource unique to New Zealand...ancient Kauri. In the middle of the store there is a 50 ton center piece with internal staircase made from a Kauri tree. It was amazing! This was also a great place to get coffee, cappuccino's and chai lattes! The warm drinks helped us to get warm after having such a rainy day!

Before we left the ancient Kauri Kingdom Barry called in our orders for fish and chips from a local restaurant up the road. We all got to taste the best fish and chips we EVER had!!! They were soooooo good!!! When we were waiting to leave and we saw a baby orka whale swimming in the sea behind the restaurant! It was so amazing!

Today was such an amazing and wonderful day! We got to learn a lot of different things

about New Zealand from Barry, our informative tour guide/driver! It was a pleasure to have him as a our driver! It was sad when our tour was over. We were able to learn so much by firsthand experience. It was good to read about these different places before we came to New Zealand but it was nothing compared to being able to experience it in real life! :)

Until next time...

Irma and Jordan

Kia Ora my fellow Americans!! This morning we got started about 8am we left Rotaroura!! Our first stop this morning was in Tauranga to visit the South Pacific Bible College; in New Zealand College is actually high school. This is also the town that Cara lived in when she lived here in New Zealand! At the college, we had three speakers who talked to us about three different areas of work that they do here in New Zealand. Our first speaker was Berenice and she spoke to us about the child welfare and the family group conferencing. Most of us from the states know what child welfare is but, we do not do family group conferencing so for us social work students; it was a real treat to hear about what this is and how it works. Basically what happens is there is a social worker, the child or youth, in some cases a legal type person and family members who are concerned about the well being of the child. The family and the child or youth will be in the room by themselves and it is up to them to develop some kind of plan of action about how things need to be handled differently to ensure the interests of the child or youth. If there is no ideal plan or if things are not getting done then the social worker must step in to insure that something does get done. In either situation, the social worker continues their follow up with the family. In this setting, the child is a very valuable part of the plan and what is going to happen. Berenice talked about the differences in the cultures and how these cases may be handled differently. She had so much interesting information and I think that we all took something away from what she had to tell us. Next Joan talked with us, she is a woman who has owned nursing homes here and how the elderly are taken care of. A lot of what she talked about sounded so much like what we have at home when it comes to our elderly and how they are

taken care of. It was information from what age people retire here to the kind of retirement they get to information about other means of income and of course she talked about the nursing homes or elderly living. Our last speaker was a Gill (pronounced Jill) and she is a missionary who traveled to Thailand with Rahab missionaries to do work with the prostitute population. In Thailand, “if it’s not nice, it doesn’t exist” so basically, it is illegal but because it’s illegal then there isn’t any prostitution. The basic idea of what they are doing is introduce these women to god, and to help them get the skills that they need so that they may be able to find jobs to help them leave the life of prostitution. So, this was a very interesting ending to our speakers for the day. After we left the college, we headed over to Mt. Maunganui (the nui part of this means big, see if you can find out what the rest means☺). This place is filled with so much beautiful scenery on the beach front, to the mountain to downtown. The shopping areas in downtown are a lot like our old town downtowns, with shops all up and down the streets on both sides. After a light lunch, a few of us went to the mountain and either walked up it or just around the bottom of it. Some of us went and walked along the beach and a couple of us went for some more shopping to bring gifts back to our friends and family. After all the afternoon fun, we checked into our motel for our last night in this amazing country. The motel was really close to the water and there was a beautiful view of it at night. Some people took advantage of the Fern Thermal Spa and some stayed behind. Afterwards, we all went out for a late dinner at wherever we wanted. This town shuts down early except for the restaurants. What a great way to end our last evening here, so sad that it is the last night. Once again, Kia Ora to our friends and family, see you soon!!!

Today was another fantastic day here in beautiful New Zealand, this day in particular was filled with lots of learning. We started with a great morning tea break and did more souvenir shopping at a great outdoor mall area that had anything from a warehouse, like our Walmart, to a great crafters mall. The on and off rain showers that characterize New Zealand weather seem to be a point of apology for the locals, but we just explain to them the crazy Texas weather and it seems to make them feel a little better.

The rest of the morning was spent in a meeting with a couple of wonderful local professionals here in Auckland! We got to hear first hand what it is truly like to be a social

worker in New Zealand. First we heard from Mark who was the representative from WINZ which is the Work Income office for New Zealand. Initially we didn't think much about hearing from them because we had just met there because they offered the meeting space for free, but his quick talk really gave us insight on the New Zealand mind set of social policy and how they don't look at programs such as unemployment or disability as social welfare, they see it as social investment. The benefits are nothing to be ashamed of and each family sees that at some point they may need the additional assistance.

The next speaker we had was Joan and she was the plunkett nurse for the Auckland area. This program was founded over 100 years and has survived through many political movements to get rid of the system, but with support of the mothers has luckily survived. Basically the program takes care of babies and mothers from about 4 to 6 weeks old up until 3 years old. They check not only the child's health but provide support for the mothers. If they need a place to drop off the child because they are frustrated or aren't sleeping the plunkett has a place to do that. If the mother needs some assistance with finding groups of other mothers or play groups or used toys the plunkett is there to help them. The program is very comprehensive and really focuses on what the needs of that mother and child are and does whatever it takes to resolve the issue. The plunketts have great relationships with both the mothers and the area agencies, so it was fascinating to see how they truly are the backbone and support of the community and families.

The big visitor for our meeting was from Jane and Skylar. Each has a very interesting role here in Auckland and was a truly fantastic experience to get to hear about local programs that could benefit us in the states. Jane was the Director of Massey Community Center which is an anything everything sort of spot for those located close by. The programs that interested me the most were the ICE Box and the Parents Night Out. The ICE Box is a voluntary high school after school hangout that provides free snacks and drinks and supervised activity after school. Activities range from ping pong tournaments to Wii to writing contests. The best part about this program was that the focus is on giving the kids a voice in what they do so they are more likely to stay off the streets and out of trouble. Parents Night Out is another fantastic program through Massey Community Center. It provides one night a month of free child care for parents who need a date night and may be lacking in family support or trustworthy child care. I can see such a need for this in Amarillo and it really is inspiring to think of the skills that we have learned over here and maybe apply these to our own community.

The afternoon was spent with a great casual talk with four Americans, Jennifer, Skylar, Justin, and Morgan, who have come over on mission work but have really been in the realm of social work while in New Zealand. Because the country is not very religious, and cautious of outsiders, especially of Americans, the best way to gain the trust of the community is through volunteer work. Not only did we get a chance to discuss the youth and family focus that their community had, we also got to see the difference in American lifestyle as opposed to New Zealander lifestyle. The biggest thing that I have noticed, and that the American group has talked about is the green lifestyle that the nation takes to heart. For example, most people walk in New Zealand everywhere if a car is owned it is generally just one car for the family and the rest walk. But perhaps the most inspiring is the lack of paper towel use. Now really it doesn't sound like that big of a deal, but when we were cooking, or cleaning up our kitchen, or just cleaning up a minor spill the, lack of a convenience such as paper towels really makes a difference.

Additionally the big difference that the group has seen is that of medical care. Even though they are just here on a work visa they have had the best medical care the country can provide. A total pregnancy and child birth experience cost nothing. A doctors visit for a regular cold might only cost \$20, a devoted plunkett nurse for a child up to three will also cost nothing. It is beautiful to see that Americans that would not have had that type of system really enjoying it and realizing the benefits of such a system. Another big difference here in New Zealand really pertaining to medical care is the use of alternative methods, such as chiropractors, herbal remedies, and the very wide use of midwives. A very interesting fact when you consider the New Zealand life expectancy is higher than the Americans!!

All in all we had a great time learning the big and small differences between the two systems. While we appreciate the convenience our society has to offer it is sure nice to look around and see the beauty and lack of trash laying around this country. However, it is sometimes the little things that make us laugh such as sunnies for sun glasses or the fact that we must ask for a toilet and not a restroom and rubbish for trash.

Today, May 25, 2010, we packed up and loaded the bus at 6:45 a.m. and headed for Auckland. It was difficult to leave the Bay of Islands and Paihia! About halfway to Auckland, we stopped to get some coffee and to use the toilet. Our appointment at Massey's was at 12:45 p.m. and since

we were running ahead of schedule, we stopped at the Albany Mall in Auckland to shop and eat lunch. We stayed there for about 2 hours. We then drove to Massey University and met with the social work program faculty and three students. Barbara started the introduction and asked that everyone introduce themselves. We all told a little about ourselves, our internships, and about some of our experiences in the field so far. Our gracious hosts provided us with tea, cake, and biscuits (cookies) before we started our in depth conversations.

Massey University has approximately 20-22 social work students who graduate each year and the majority of the gender is female which is very similar to the United States.

Some questions we asked were about the differences between their programs and ours, what are some of the programs they provide, and the differences in social workers learning to speak English. In order for the social work students to be able to learn or to be a student, many times it requires that the student learn the English language. In many cases it is not their second language; it can be their third or fourth language. Their BSW social workers can do therapy and counseling, whereas our students cannot do therapy or counseling until we get our licensed clinical degree. They also have a limited number of internships and the positions are very competitive whereas our internships are plentiful and we have choices of where we want to be placed. Their main positions for the social work field include the medical, mental health, and child protection type agencies. They have an extremely high burnout rate in the child welfare system just like ours in the states. Another question we asked was concerning their continuing education credits after they got their degrees. According to their system they have to have 150 hours every three years compared to our 30 hours every two years. They were very informative and we learned a lot about their educational process compared to ours. We left the University and headed to our hotel where we got to relax and do some catch up work on our journaling. At 7pm we all went over to Mo and Cara's room and the graduate students gave a lecture on the Plunkett nurses that we get to talk to tomorrow. So that is it for now everyone, we know you all miss us a lot and we miss you as well. Hope you enjoy the pictures and we will send more information tomorrow.

We left Hobsonville @ 8 and headed to Mt. Victoria to view Auckland from there. We were caught in early morning traffic but luckily they have a bus lane and we were able to bypass 6 miles of backed up traffic. We drove past the Lone Star Cafe- a little bit of Texas here in New Zealand.

We saw their low income housing. It is \$100 a week per bedroom. They normally rent by the week. They encourage the renters to keep up the property or even improve. The senior housing apartments are one bedrooms also.

We took many pictures of the beautiful panoramic view there. Words cannot describe how you can look in all directions and find something that you are awed by. This view had the ocean, sail boats, mountains, harbor, the city skyline, and quaint houses. The view was added to by a group of about ten young men that were running the mountain. At the top where we were they decided to do pushups before heading back down. I believe a couple of us took pictures of them.

About half way down the mountain there is a government owned home that they allow writers to live in for six months. It is quiet, isolated and has a beautiful view. I believe some of our teachers are thinking about writing a book.

We rode the enclosed ferry to Devonport. The inside has tables with six padded seats to each. It was so quiet and smooth and went past fast.

Two of our group did the skywalk; I will not tell you which two but they did come back down safely. Both loved it and were sorry when it was over. The smart ones went speed shopping because there were so many great stores there.

The women in New Zealand for the most part are very savvy dressers. They layer, wear leggings, and look like they stepped out of the fashion magazines. Everyone has been polite, friendly, and helpful. All of us love it here.

We then made a three hour trip to Rotorua. The first part of the trip was show and tell about what we did and bought. Then some tried to sleep for awhile.

As we entered Matamata we found out that this was where the Hobbiton in the Lord of the Rings was filmed. The set is still set up on the farm but we did not go there. The rest of the movie was filmed in Wellington.

Rotorua looked like Amarillo with ten car dealerships and fast food signs everywhere. We stopped at the grocery for those that wanted to cook in their rooms and the rest of us went to Fat Dogs for food and delicious dessert. At 5:30 it has already been dark for quite some time and it makes us tired. This is Fall for them with winter just a month way.

Friday's Blog

Today was a day full of unforgettable experiences! We made our way over to Wai-O-Tapu (Sacred Waters) Thermal Wonderland this morning which is only about a 30 minute drive from Rotorua, where we are staying. We started off our journey by watching the geyser erupt at 10:15am this morning. The park guide dropped some soap deposits into the opening of the geyser to make it erupt. It reminded me of when we were little children and we used to put baking soda and vinegar down the hole of a sand volcano in our sand box to make it erupt. However, this was on a much larger scale and it received much larger reactions from the audience! After we saw the geyser, we started our 3K walk around the thermal wonderland. We walked among 24 points of interest including Devil's Home, Rainbow Crater, Artist's Palette, Wai-O-Tapu Geyser, Frying Pan Flat, Champagne Pool, and Devil's Bath. Much of these were created by the hot springs and the sulfuric acid rising from underground water. Devil's Bath was extra lime green today due to the rainy weather we had during our walk. The thermal wonderland was absolutely beautiful and peaceful! It was unlike anything that I ever experienced before in my life and it felt like I was walking on another planet! We also got to see bubbling mud that is caused by the volcanic activity below the surface of the earth.

After we left the thermal wonderland, we spent some time in Rotorua before heading on our next adventure. Our group had an indigenous evening experience with the tribe of Te Po here in Rotorua! We went on a guided tour around the Maori village and then we were treated to a wonderful evening experience! The night activities started off with the traditional welcoming of the Maori. George, from California, was our representative of the group. He walked out on the lawn and received the fern branch from the warrior as a sign that we were here in peace. We were then welcomed in to the house by the Maori warrior and listened to the welcome speech in Maori. There was singing and dancing and games done before us on the stage. At one part of the dancing, they got volunteers from the audience, first the ladies to perform the Poi dance and

then the men to perform the Haka war dance. Most of our group of girls went up on stage and performed the dance and we had a blast! After the dancing and performances were over for the evening, we went to the restaurant to enjoy our Hangi feast. Before sitting down at our table, we viewed our feast cooking in the ground. We ate an assortment of new and wonderful foods tonight starting with bread, sweet corn on the cob, oysters, and eel. We then made our way over to the salad bar and filled our plates with shrimp, crab, more oysters, and an assortment of pastas and salads. When we arrived back at our table, we enjoyed the main dish which included lamb, pork, chicken, pumpkin and kumora, which is a sweet potato. After we got done filling our bellies with the yummy food, we made our way over to the dessert table. We tried povlova, chocolate moose, chocolate dipped custard, vanilla ice cream covered in raspberries, and an assortment of fresh fruits. Now, I am sorry if I have made you all hungry after reading this. I do hope you can forgive me. I just wanted to make sure that I am made this blog as thorough as possible. ☺ I forgot to mention that we enjoyed hot tea after our meal and then we walked up to the top and enjoyed hot chocolate as we sat on the “hot seats” and watched the geyser erupt. The “hot seats” used to be hot springs that people would sit in to relieve their aches and pains and sore muscles. However, they have now been covered up by cement but you can still feel the warmth of the hot springs underneath when you sit down, hints where they got the name. However, one must be careful not to sit on a crack because they will soon jump out of their seat because the steam is quite warm! Before we left the Maori village, we made sure to dip our hands in the water and rub the rock for good luck. We then came back to the hotels and enjoyed our time in our own personal spa. The water comes up naturally hot from the ground here because of all of the thermal activity so they do not have to pay to heat up the water. Pretty fabulous if you ask me!

-Ashton

By the time you get this the travelers will be home! I stayed behind to work for another 3 weeks here, but I wanted to catch you up on what happened on our last day in NZ as a study abroad group.

We left beautiful Tauranga on a sunny day--our only sunny day here except for the day we landed here. We drove about 1 1/2 hours and stopped at Paeora for morning tea. This town is famous because the very popular soft drink L&P is made here. (popular in NZ, that is) Then we drove to Auckland where we spent 2 1/2 hours at the Auckland museum. It is 3 floors of New Zealand history. It was interesting that on the floor with all of the war history, they were having a US Memorial day service. We even heard the US national anthem sung! Our favorite display was the volcano section where we got to experience a virtual volcano. We ate lunch at the museum cafe. The food was excellent.

Then we drove to the airport and weighed our luggage--it was a little heavier than when we left the states! Some had to shift luggage around to meet the strict weight requirements of Air New Zealand. The group checked in at 4:00 for their 7:15 flight. I said my goodbyes at the check-in station.

Overall, it was a wonderful trip despite the weather. I enjoyed showing the students my beloved country that I consider my second home.

Professor Cara Speer

Hi everyone!

Well, we are home. The trip back felt like a long, hard journey.

Saying goodbye to Cara at the airport, we left Auckland on Sunday, May 30th at 7:15 pm their time. We spent about 12 hours on the plane and yet arrived in Los Angeles at about noon on the same day.

Going through customs wasn't hard, just awkward with all our new luggage and souvenirs filling our suitcases. Then we hiked with our belongings to another terminal for our American Airlines flights back to Texas.

Our first domestic flight left LAX at 3:45 and we got into Dallas at about 8:45, just in time to run through the airport there to connect to the 9:25 flight to Amarillo, but we made it! And we arrived in Amarillo at 10:35 pm. Whew.... more than 20 hours traveling, but only 3 hours later because of the time differences. Amazing.

The trip was quite an educational and enjoyable experience. We made memories that will last a lifetime, sharing an adventure we will remember forever. Many of us have decided we will go back to New Zealand, a country that is beautiful, welcoming, and very different from Texas. Maybe next time, some of you will be joining us.

It was also wonderful last night to sleep in my own bed and be back home this morning drinking coffee at my own kitchen table. Somehow traveling for that many days has made me appreciate my "normal life" even more as well.

Thanks for sharing this journey with us through the blogs we have been writing. I sure you will hear even more now that your friends and family members are back home safely.

Dr. Mo Cuevas















