The Blanket Exercise

Nam Nguyen – 000520322 – nguyen0465@saskpolytech.ca

The Blanket Exercise was one of the most impressive activities I had been involved in since arriving in Canada to pursue my studies in Cloud Computing & Blockchain at Saskatchewan Polytechnic last August. It was fun at the beginning, then my emotions moved from excitement to deep thinking about the events, and I was shocked by the result at the end. In this essay, I want to reflect on my own experience from that class activity on Tuesday morning, February 6th, 2024.

First and foremost, I did not know that there were so many terminologies about Indigenous Peoples and their vast lands in North America. From movies I watched in Vietnam, my limited knowledge about them was of Indians wearing clothes with feathers on their hats. But actually, there are multiple types of people, and they live with their tribes instead of moving around to gather food. At that time, I was enlightened and my mind was shaped by Aboriginal peoples in Canada, First Nations, Inuit, Métis, Indian, and Indigenous. Even though I cannot distinguish them by their looks, from that time on, I knew there were some differences. My whole mindset changed at that moment about First Nations and about my friend, who is also a First Nation.

Secondly, I was shocked to learn that I was representing the Indigenous Peoples who died because of diseases, and some of them could have been from Europeans. I had heard about the diseases that white people brought to America a long time ago, but I did not realize that more than half of the class was representing people who died because of it. Then suddenly, the lands were resized by the instructors, and I also wondered whether it was intentional or just a mistake. But it was intentional, people died, more people from Europe came, people who lived on their lands were displaced for new ones, and so on. And some people died because of executions by the government; it seemed like things fell apart so quickly. Not many people and blankets were on the floor. I cannot imagine if my whole country faced the same things. I felt angry at that moment.

Time flies, and at the end of the exercise, only a few blankets, like two or three, were on the floor; some of my classmates had to sit with one foot in their "land" and one foot out of it. I know that it is the time they have to work with the white people who had killed their ancestors and pushed them out of their land. And when I heard about some Acts, Policies, and Rules that forced them to leave their children out of their hands, I felt like I could not handle it anymore; my mind just thought about it, not thinking about anything else. I felt sorry for them, who lost their kids and a culture that got lost because of that.

In conclusion, my mind has changed, my knowledge has strengthened, and my emotions have been on a roller coaster due to the events and stories of the past. I would love to know more and more about history, but I think it’s time to learn about how things could change and ensure they will not happen again in the future, in Learning Outcome 2. However, my curiosity about Learning Outcome 3 is even greater; I am eager to know how the current government could make up for the people who have lost so much already.