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Community in New Zealand

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Grace Rieman
New Zealand
5/12/20

Community In New Zealand

Kia Ora! I have been lucky enough to have an amazing and supportive kiwi host here in Dunedin. She is a third-year med student at the University of Otago and chose to flat with international students this year so that she could experience New Zealand in a different way than she would normally. My host and I have very different backgrounds, she comes from a very large family and went to an all-girls boarding school for her later years of education. This seems to be a common trend among Kiwis. Our habits and mannerisms are fairly similar for the most part, which made it easy for me to feel like I fit in. One of the most obvious differences between Kiwis and Americans is the slang and words that are used in everyday conversations. I had a hard time understanding many phrases that she used at the beginning of the semester due to never hearing them before and trying to decipher her strong Kiwi accent. For example, “keen” means interested, “sweet as” means cool or thanks, “tramping” is hiking, and Kiwis often use the phrase “Yah, nah” to fill a break in conversation or to slightly disagree with what was said. Similarly, I used many phrases that my host had never heard of. Music is very important in our flat; we always have a huge speaker playing music loudly. While some people listen to American rap and pop in New Zealand, D&B (Drum and Bass) is much more popular. This is a combination of what I would call rave/electronic music and heavy bass.

We have both found that our customs and cultures are very similar. One thing that we both agree on is that NZ is more connected and community-oriented than America. This has become very obvious with the COVID-19 outbreak. As soon as the outbreak hit New Zealand, an

intense sense of social responsibility and care swept over the country. Even though I am not a NZ citizen, I could tell how important it was that we all look after one another and respect the government policies that were put in place. Due to the strong sense of community and respect here, I can now say that I am in one of the safest countries in the world regarding COVID-19. I have never felt more at home and assured in this time of incredible uncertainty. After interviewing my host and having many engaging and fun conversations with her over the course of the semester, I have gotten a glimpse of how great New Zealand is. America often dominates international news and politics, but it is important to recognize smaller countries like New Zealand and the contributions and examples they put forth.