

While Covid-19 has led to many complications and hardships it has also brought new opportunities to experience and connect more in depth with my culture. This past year spent in lockdown I have had plenty of free time to try and connect with my culture. When the world first started changing I felt happy, I was glad to be out of school early and spend my time doing nothing. After a month or two of not doing anything I started to feel a lot more stressed and lonely. Specifically, when I had absolutely nowhere to go and nothing to do, I felt lost. Powwows and other ceremonies had been cancelled and spending time with large groups was no longer allowed. For the first time in my life I didn't go to any powwows, unlike past years of going to several powwows every summer. Dancing has always been special to me and because of Covid I could no longer do that. I reached out to my family and they suggested I try new things such as picking sweetgrass and berries, baking bannock, beading and making ribbon skirts. This helped me feel closer with my family because doing these things meant spending time with them. Personally I was more than happy to do these activities.

Shortly after lockdown started my family and I moved closer to be with family. During the summer my Nohkom and mother took me to pick sweetgrass for the first time. While out picking sweetgrass they told me stories and explained things I previously hadn't known. Later in August we went out to pick berries, specifically raspberries. It felt refreshing to be closer to nature, considering that I rarely went outdoors before.

Unlike myself, my mother has always spent her time beading and she's tried teaching me before Covid was even a thought but with how busy I was with school I felt as though I had no time, while I now regret not learning sooner I'm thankful I got the opportunity to learn, even if it took a lockdown to make me realize this. Along with learning how to bead regalia my mother also taught me how to sew ribbon skirts, it took me months to learn but luckily I had those months to spare. Lastly, though I've made bannock before it was never that good but the more time I spent on it the better I got. With the more time I had to improve my skills on these topics I became a lot better than I ever was, and I'm proud of that. Now although I still have more to learn I'll take the time to practice and continue to try even after Covid passes. Not only did Covid give me an opportunity to connect more closely with my culture but I also had more time to spend with my family, and I'm still grateful for that.

In my own experience all throughout lockdown I struggled with keeping busy and keeping my mind occupied, but as I previously wrote I was fortunate enough to have a supportive and culturally involved family. Luckily I was still able to dance as people began creating virtual powwows, I was thrilled and joined when I could. As more time passed, family and quarantined groups could now spend time with each other and I was happy to spend time with my extended family once again. With the arrival of Covid-19 I learned to do many new things I otherwise never would have thought I could do, and despite the tragedy I was lucky enough to spend this time learning and connecting to my culture. I'm very thankful to be a part of Mother Earth, and I am extremely proud to be Indigenous.