

# Cross-Cultural Encounters: Cal Poly's Interaction with the Maori of New Zealand



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## My Project

As a student interested in both film and traveling, I took the opportunity while studying abroad in New Zealand to film my experience and create a short documentary. The purpose of my project was to familiarize myself with all aspects of the filmmaking process including the technical, social, and ethical issues and to take a stab at creating a type of media I never have before. This experiment was very open-ended and though it began as an attempt at a short ethnography of the indigenous Maori, it ended as a collection of student experiences from the trip and included peer interviews.



## Notes to Self

1. Know your battery life! I need extra batteries and an idea of when I will be able to charge my camera.
2. Ask for help! Movies are big projects. It's ok to ask for help when you need it.
3. Choose a subject that isn't you. Had I been a fly on the wall during this study abroad, I wouldn't have had the issue of trying to participate and be present while observing and being a filmmaker at the same time. I wouldn't have been in one of the two, divided social groups of students and could have captured more footage.
4. Know what you're doing and be clear about it. Perhaps making a film of somewhere you've never been before isn't a great idea because there was no way I could have outlined what I wanted to capture. However, if I were to go back to New Zealand now and visit the Maori who we spent two weeks with, they would know me and probably feel comfortable enough to let me interview them about cultural tourism. I would be able to outline what I wanted because I know what they have to offer, and I would be able to clearly explain what I was doing instead of asking them to have blind faith.



## What I Learned

I learned how to use a camera and film editing software by trial and error of using these tools. I learned about film ethics by being fully immersed in a foreign culture that I did not wish to exploit. And, most importantly, I learned about the importance, as a filmmaker to, in some instances, remove yourself from your subject. These are lessons I could have never learned in a documentary film class. This project has been technically and mentally challenging, but a great experience that I do not regret. My film is short- about twenty minutes- and it's nothing like I thought it would be, but I believe this time around the road that got to the finished product was infinitely more valuable than the film itself.