

Assignment 4 Due: November 6th, 2016.

Choose one or two of the Sustainable Development Goals or targets. Discuss based on observations you've made and learning you've gained during your internship and other experience/ knowledge, the challenges and solution to addressing these in your host country and any parallels or contrasts with these same challenges in Canada.

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

If someone had asked me six months ago if Canada had slums, I would have answered no. My general knowledge told me slums only occurred in third-world countries. Canada is one of the most developed and wealthiest countries, you could never find a slum in Canada, right? Wrong, if you base your criteria for adequate living conditions on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a First Nation reserve in Canada might not meet that criteria. Working in a township has really helped me reflect on the parallels between the living condition in townships in South Africa and reserves in Canada.

The intention of creating reserves and townships was to segregate the non-whites from the whites, but it also deprived the indigenous communities of their land and resources. This segregation has continued to this day, and it continues to limit access to basic services for the communities that live in these areas. The indigenous communities have to live in conditions that are neither safe or sustainable.

Goal 11 of the SDGs states that cities and human settlements should be inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Reserves and townships are definitely human settlements goal 11 addresses. To make these human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable we would have to address the challenge of growing populations in these human settlements and build proper infrastructure to support that growth. This leads me to the second major challenge both townships and reserves face currently, the accessibility of clean water. Goal 6 of the SDGs states that there should be the "availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all." Infrastructure and water management in townships and reserves would need to improve drastically before goal 6 and goal 11 can be achieved.

Everyday I ride into the township for work and the constant sighting of overcrowded houses, unpaved roads and water trucks are obvious signs of poor infrastructure. Townships are often neglected when it comes to building proper infrastructure. They are constantly growing and the expansion of the township is often unregulated, so care is not taken to build proper infrastructure. The living standards in townships drop down drastically compared to the rest of South Africa. The story in Canada is not so different. Reserves are usually built outside of major urban centres, away from easy access to basic services. The location and access to public transportation limits people's options from accessing a variety of resources. Reserves are slowly becoming overpopulated because the First Nations community is the fastest growing community in Canada. Another major challenge that both township and aboriginal communities are currently facing is the access to clean water. An article on the water conditions in reserves indicated "two thirds of all First Nation communities in Canada have been under at least one drinking water advisory at some time in the last decade."¹ This numbers tells us that more then half of First Nation communities had some kind of water

¹ *Bad water: 'Third World' conditions on First Nations in Canada*, Levasseur, J., & Marcoux, J. (2015, 10 14). Retrieved from CBC News website: www.cbc.ca

issue. Resident of townships also struggle with the same challenge. It isn't uncommon to see people carry their water buckets to collect water from the water trucks because the water has been shut down in the entire township. Throughout my stay in the suburbs of Pietermaritzburg the water has never been shut down, even though the entire province is experiencing a drought. The water gets shut off mostly in the township due to water being used excessively and this leads to low pressure which making water spares. Should the solution to these challenges be to completely get rid of reserves and townships? I believe this is unrealistic and not sensitive to the history that these settlements hold to the residents. For the residents that live in townships, they have built strong community around themselves where they have preserved they're culture and language. The reserve has also been a stronghold for the First Nation communities to preserve their customs and rituals.² Instead I believe there needs to be strategic investment into the rehabilitation of these human settlements.

The solution would need to address the unequal treatment that townships and reserves receive from their governments. These human settlements are often neglected, and the ratio of resources and residents are unbalanced. For me it was a shock to find out that in country like South Africa one of the most progressive and developed countries in Africa you have places like Cape Town that looks like European city and then just a couple of blocks you will see rows of slums next to it. The issue is not that there is poverty in South Africa or Canada a matter a fact but that there is such a huge disparity in the wealth. The centre of this issues is negligence of the governments in Canada and South Africa toward the residents of these settlements. Unless attitudes are changed within the governance, support for further development would not be sustainable. If by 2030, the world wants to ensure the living conditions in human settlements improve significantly, there would need to be further development to support the growing populations. This development would need to be very regulated to make progress in areas of housing and transport systems. Also special attention should be paid to building water systems, so that people would have clean running water available to them. If care is taken in building proper infrastructure in the beginning of development this will to lead to a more sustainable and resilient living environment in the long term for both the residents of reserves and townships.

In conclusion to ensure that all people have access to clean water and adequate living conditions regardless of where they live, attitudes need to change. There needs to be a shift in government priorities to guarantee that reserves and township are given proper attention and investment.

² Erin, H. (2009). Retrieved from Indigenous Foundations: www.indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca