There are a number of things I learnt during the elective. I learnt history. I have always known that the white people settled in North America and displaced/replaced the Aboriginal people. However, I never stopped to ponder and feel just how ugly, unjust it was and what impact it has had on the people. As a result of the elective, I feel a greater understanding for the Aboriginal people. After reading the articles and hearing arguments presented by the speakers, I see why it is appropriate to refer to the past few hundred years as colonization and most importantly: a holocaust. I empathize with Natives of today. I see how unjust the stereotypes against them are, and I feel compelled to dispel them. I already started- by talking to my friends and by writing the newspaper. This elective changed my world view.

The elective gave me the chance to interact with the people from the Six Nations: youngsters and elders. The interactions were not only meaningful but also very telling of the people. It is hard to come with concrete examples of how I came to feel what I feel. I can only say that I got a glimpse of their philosophy: their connectedness to nature, land, family, community and the sacred; their warmth, their sense of humour, and hospitality. I found the people so unconcerned with the material and so very generous. It is a very different way of being from so many other people of the Western world. Realizing their way was essential for me to understand the conflict of Caledonia, and many other conflicts, spoken or unspoken, that exist in Canada regarding the Aboriginal people.

I am really glad for being part of this elective. I see that the Aboriginal people are misunderstood and mistreated. I see the disconnection between them and ‘others’. I realize that this is not only a Canadian problem. Similar problems exist in Latin America, Australia and worldwide. Their health – mental and physical – is suffering as a result. I do not want to think where this road leads… I feel motivated to change it. I can start by challenging existing stereotypes. I am going to Red Lake this summer where I will get a chance to work with Aboriginal people living there. Who knows what opportunities will arise? In the meantime, I think it is important to allow other people learn what I have learnt during this elective. I wholeheartedly support integrating Aboriginal health into the medical school curriculum Canada-wide. It is a great start to disseminating cultural tolerance, abolishing ignorant stereotypes and fulfilling the human rights standards. It would allow Canada to live up to the promise it makes to its people. It is a great shot at change, good health and equity.