

NI'NOXSOLA

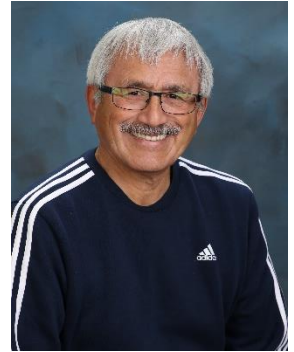
Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

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'Experiences in Indonesia'



One of the first things I noticed when we arrived in Djakarta, was the humidity. We were picked up by someone from the office. Driving from the airport the squalor was very apparent. The canals were open sewers and people were washing their clothes and bathing in these canals. It was a mind opening experience.



The office had an enclosed courtyard with a mango tree growing in the middle; fresh fruit for breakfast. The yard had an 8 foot cement fence with broken glass embedded on the top to keep out anyone who may have wanted to do some damage.

We would walk to Hotel Indonesia for dinner and experienced a sad display of poverty. We crossed a bridge over a major highway coming into the city. Children and adults with broken limbs that were not set properly were begging for money. There were dozens of them on the bridge and we were almost overwhelmed by people reaching out and grabbing you. There happened to be a policeman on the bridge and he came to our aid by yelling at them and threatening them with a club.

When we related this to our contact at the office he suggested that we take a recognized cab to the hotel. It made me think of how fortunate we are to be living in a country where our health care takes care of us when we are injured or sick. Even though the majority of Canadians are fortunate, there are still a number of people in Canada without access to safe drinking water and safe homes. We truly live in a great country, but we still have problems.

After a week we continued our journey to Irian Jaya now called Raja Ampat in a DC 3 aircraft. It was a journey which included stops at a lot of islands as we were flying from one end of Indonesia to the other. We spent the night in Makassar, which was halfway to Sorong. After having had dinner we were returning to our hotel when we saw a rat cross the road. This was the biggest rat I had ever seen. It seemed to be the size of a cat.

The next morning I woke up to the sound of an imam calling the people to morning prayer. Indonesia's religion is primarily Islam, my first exposure to this religion. The next day we carried on to Sorong arriving about mid afternoon. We still had another leg to go on our journey and this was by boat.

I learned a lot about Muslims and their religion. They are supposed to pray five times a day but there were exceptions. If they were working in the field they would say their morning prayers and then skip the other three prayers during the day. However, they would say all four prayers before bedtime. They were very strong in their beliefs and accepted people of other faiths. The Papuans in the area we worked in were Christian.

I had many interesting discussions with an Indonesian geologist who was assigned to me as he could speak English and was my interpreter. When I was returning to Canada, I spent a week in Djakarta and he showed me around the city. He invited me to his home for dinner the night before I left and was introduced to his wife, sister and son. His son had the misfortune to be born without a right hand. In their religion, thieves had their right hand cut off. That is the hand they use to feed themselves and their left hand was used to clean themselves after using the toilet. I really felt for his son and family as he would have to live with this handicap.

These are just a few memories that come to mind. More will come later.

Mooshum Bryce