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Program: Creation Care Study Program

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Major: International Development

Country: New Zealand

For the last four months, I lived in an old convent in Kaikoura, New Zealand with 23 other people, some chickens (also known as “chooks”), two llamas and a cat named Molly. There was no TV, no WiFi, and no central heating. But there were plenty of impactful moments. I will remember the hours spent scrubbing my clothes by hand and the importance of slowing down. I will remember the long walks with friends after challenging class discussions. I will remember the fish and chips, vegemite, and classic Kiwi sayings, such as “sweet as!” I will remember the cups of tea in the houses of neighbors, as I listened to their stories. Stories of what the town used to be like, stories of hardships and loss, and also of joy and gratitude. I will remember the beautiful carvings in the *wharenui* in Te Kakano Marae and how these, too, carry stories that hold a people together. I will remember quizzing each other on the different types of birds and plants before our field exam. It took me to study abroad to recognize how wrapped up it all is. How we live our lives impacts our beliefs and values, and what we believe impacts how we live. I was given the incredible opportunity to take a break from the normal chaotic and stressful routine of a college semester and look with new eyes. I recognized the importance of place – in my studies, in our lifestyle, and in the stories of those around me. Our identity is shaped by where we are from. Wherever I may end up, I now know how to make a home, how to uncover the hidden treasures that we may not initially see. For these places mean something to someone, thus, it should mean something to me. For, as Aldo Leopold writes about in his *Sand County Almanac*, which we read in class, in order to care for and conserve a place, we must first love it, and in order to love it, we must first know it.