For this paper, I chose to address Native American Rights, discussing in particular cultural revitalization, language survival, self-determination and sovereignty. I feel these topics are especially important to the Lakota people because of how long their culture has been suppressed. Since the creation of boarding schools, the culture that makes the Lakota’s a unique group has been looked down upon, encouraging conformity.

During my stay on the Rosebud reservation, I noticed the strong influence of Lakota culture in every place we visited. Beautiful traditional murals are painted on the sides of buildings, every person we met had some craft or traditional talent that was deeply rooted in their past.

Even the children on the reservation have a deep sense of tradition, as made evident by their knowledge in crafts, dance and music. It seemed that all of our hosts’ children had at least one craft or talent they actively participated in, whether it is beading, dancing, singing or even hand games. Though their age ranged from very young (5 or 6) to teens, they all recognized the importance behind the things they did. They were not dancing simply because it’s fun, they’re dancing because it’s an essential part of their culture and a way to honor themselves and their tribe.

These talents have created a new form of revenue for the tribe as well. The tanning of hides can be a very lucrative way of supporting your family and tribe. Hides sell for hundreds of dollars, and can be used for a wide variety of things. These hides can be sold on or off the reservation as a way of raising money.

Apart from traditional past times, education is also emphasized greatly on the reservation. The university offers a different path for those who choose it. A degree opens doors to young adults who may not have had the option to leave Rosebud prior to receiving their education. For those students who choose to stay, there is a constant need for educated people to fulfill the jobs of doctors, teachers and other careers.

I found the unwillingness to conform by the Lakota people to be quite honorable. Though they were repressed for decades, they refuse to abandon the things that define them as a people. These traditions, their language and their beliefs are something they are willing to fight for, and sometimes even die for. I have an immense amount of respect for the Lakota tribe for preserving what is rightfully theirs.