

11-21-2021

Uncertainty, music, and the COVID-19 pandemic

Brooke

Name for posting: Brooke

Relationships to EWU: staff

Additional information: Colville Tribal member - staff with CAMP - student in the History MA program

Your experience during COVID-19: At the end of March 2020 no one knew what to expect. My director believed the “COVID business” would blow over and staff had to fight to work from home despite the entire campus shifting to that model. He thought we would not be productive since we weren’t in the office and we bypassed him by coordinating with our Dean. This was my introduction to the new work life from home. Paranoia, disbelief and uncertainty.

The next 7 months were split with 2 days in the office and 3 from home. I kept my worries and anxieties at bay by taking on extra courses to finish my masters degree since all classes were online. Rumors about layoffs loomed and I packed up my personal items from the office in anticipation. At home I listened to Post Malone’s “Hollywood is Bleeding” and wore a fuzzy yellow sweater from WalMart’s discount rack incessantly. Protests erupted with the black and Brown bodies killed over just existing. COVID deaths and lockdowns were a part of life. My new norm was escaping politics and plague through work and homework, Post Malone, dogwalks with my husband and anxious trips to the grocery store.

Then I was laid off in October 2020 because I was bumped by someone with seniority. Thankfully I received help from my tribe and also stayed on at EWU as a non-student hourly at part-time. But this gave me more time for homework and I buried myself. Taylor Swift and the Weekend joined my rotation of music and the fuzzy yellow sweater was my security blanket still. Endurance during the pandemic consisted of questionable musical taste, functional depression and park time outings with dogs and husband.

Now it’s almost December 2021. We were called back to campus. My job position changed for the better. Uncertainty is always near. Politics, racial strife, climate change issues and COVID death tolls have morphed and persisted. My fuzzy yellow sweater is in the closet as a reminder and I did break it out two weeks during a moment when it provided security. Post Malone has semi-retired as I reclaimed my “cool kid” punk roots. But the return to normalcy/lifted quarantine has allowed the suppressed emotions and anxiety to catch fire in unexpected ways and the false constructs I had in place are burnt to the ground. The future includes a booster shot, Post Malone concert, more dogwalks with my husband and amplifying the voices of marginalized people. (To Hell with makeup and uncomfortable shoes though.)