

Article for Newsletter: Diary of a First Timer!

By Debra Norby Colgate-4th Grade Teacher from Salida, Colorado

Day 0:

Dear Diary, Ok I made it to Albuquerque with a brief stop at Meow Wolf in Santa Fe. Not really sure what I saw there, but I feel a geographer should do a study on that place, maybe even a story map, but I don't think even that would get me to an understanding of that place?

It was time to scout the Old Town neighborhood for museums, breweries, happy hours, and possible eating establishments...any opportunities for live music and then hit the hay and come out in the morning running. Mission accomplished.

At breakfast, I can smell it. There are teachers here! I have already met 3 teachers from Colorado and I haven't opened my mouth yet. My social anxiety has already lessened; I have met comrades from my home state! I admit, I'm feeling a little nervous at this point, they are geographers, but I do have quite a bit of experience at conferences and how to make the best choices...it's just a matter of enacting my master plan to session planning. Yes I am a master at planning! I am feeling somewhat confident at this juncture and I at the conference registration table. What do I find? Very helpful volunteers guiding me to refreshments! I am so happy there is coffee, or did I just steal coffee?

I suppose I should write my master plan for the conference so I don't get side-tracked, I am a seasoned, professional, conference goer, albeit.

Master Plan for Conference Planning

Day 1- Theme Day- This year it is Native Americans and beefing up that unit for Colorado History for my students.

Day 2- Tech Day- Yep this could be very one of my "f" days—fruitful or frustrating.

Day 3- Panic Day-Whatever I can use this next school year day- I know me panicking, but I need the next big great idea for next week!

Day 1 – Theme Day

Dear Diary, Ok on to my first session. I love Primary Sources, so what could be better than Maps that are Primary Sources?? Carol Warren was a great presenter! We did engaging lessons with our session attenders; always a plus to start the day. I have so many resources to look up! Next session: "Native Americans and Indigenous People in Comic Books and Graphic Novels: How Representation Matters" (I thought the last session's title was long?) Mr. Rollins presented numerous books on the topic for different age levels. I already have an idea for my Native American storytelling unit and how to integrate with geography. Did I think of it, or did he? See I am on the collaboration geography train. So proud of myself!

Next session, whaaaaaat...there are none? I get to explore, without feeling guilty? This is the best conference EVER!

Brooke Runnette is a very engaging speaker. What a cool life she must have? I wonder how one person could possibly do that much. She probably has no kids? Right? There's a reception with food later? YES! Best conference ever!

Day 2 –Tech Day

Dear Diary, after visiting with vendors and my new geographer friends, I pick my next poisons for the day. First up: Google's Geo Tools. I know I can handle the frustration, but there may be good news for

me. Yes there is! Chromebooks and Google Maps work together! Such great news! I am gonna love this session. I have so many new things to try: The Walk With Us Project, Google Expeditions, Paul Santec 's Walk, Google Earth Education Website, Google Earth Engine, My Maps, Geteach.com, and in all the sites I will explore how to best use this with 4th graders. Idea: Students should pick a subject and use Google Earth Engine and explore the subject over time. Would this work with the Cheyenne or Ute Native Americans?

Session 2 is titled: "Oh the Places You'll Go: A Hands-on Workshop of Google's Geo Tools." I think we are gonna use the google cardboards! OH JOY! Oh man, I wish I could get this in my classroom. This was a great session, but HOW do I get the phones? How do I get the router in my room with my tech guys?? Well, it gives me something to talk about with them, if nothing else?

Session 3 is Story Mapping with Joseph Kerski , aka Fred Armisen (Portlandia). This guy exudes excitement for Story Mapping, which is all abuzz at the conference. I can't wait to use this with my students...wait maybe I should have story mapped my experience at the conference? I am getting so ahead of myself! Fred's (whoops! Mr. Kerski's) enthusiasm for this subject wants me to learn this new technology, so I can become a close personal friend of Mr. Kerski. Whenever anyone says anything about Colorado, he'll ask if they know me. I'm distracted, anyways, I learned the basics of Story Mapping without becoming frustrated. Right where I want my 4th graders to be! I am so clever! I'm thinking Native American travels around Colorado, Greek Mythology, Back to School story mapping, Map Journaling, the list goes on! Ok I'm not frustrated, but I do want to know more...how can I use my own pictures from my own drive?

Next session: "Teaching with Story Maps, "YOU Can Do It!" I wonder who comes up with these titles. This is great, I'm gonna create my own Story Map and there is one-on-one support for me! Not that I need it, but if I need help or I have questions. Here I go, I'm creating my own story map. Well so far, I probably need some support, but I better think of an intelligent question beforehand, so it looks like I know what I'm doing. Here goes: Why can't I use pictures from my drive? Mr. Lash says I can and here's how...I'm sensing that he knows I don't know what I'm doing? Whew! End of the day, except I do want to check out the Hopper!

Day 3-Panic Day

Dear Diary, Ok this is it! NO more joking around I have one day left to pick the best sessions for next week when I start school and all the teachers want to find out what I'm gonna try new this year. I will have the best ideas because of this conference! I have to exercise the "best choice part of the brain" and I need to stay focused. Maybe I shouldn't have gone on the Hopper last night?? I think the smart choice for me is "Resources for Geography Awareness Week." Yep! Well, I didn't make it cause I ran into Dory from the Boston Public Library who actually heard what I was saying on the Hopper last night and she had some exciting ideas for me and so we sat down and talked for an hour. Sorry Kansas Alliance!

Next up: Geo Inquiry: This session is awful lot like Agents of Change that I did a few years back with an added geo influence. Maybe I can whip a smaller trial project this year and be on the look-out for a great project for next year. I like how they walk the student and the teacher through some of the difficult things; and the encouragement of community guidance throughout the project.

Next up a must! Family Geography Night. I always get roped into heading up the Family Literacy Night, this year it is gonna be a Family Geography Night! I can't wait! The information that we got, and the games we played at this session, I am gonna look like a superstar in my principal's eyes! Thanks Michigan Alliance! Yes, I am starting to get dizzy, but I think I have one more session in me to learn how to use geography themes and activities using Chromebook and yes there is food again tonight. As they say in Norway, UFFDA!

Dear Diary, what a great couple of days. I've never been to Quebec City, I wonder if I should study French? Is NCGE the Best Conference ever, or maybe it's just my superior conference session professional choice making???