

Excerpt from a speech by Rich Appiah to a group of incoming students at the University of Guelph

“Those of you who have heard about the Downtown Eastside know that it's considered to be one the most impoverished urban centres in Canada. While working in a community garden with students from UBC, my friends and I heard or saw homeless people begging for food; sex trade workers strolling for tricks; drug addicts openly shooting up, and then tripping out in the streets as they came down from their high.

Nevertheless, in meeting with the residents of the Downtown Eastside, we discovered a vibrant community of people taking care of people, of individuals willing themselves to make a difference with what little they had. While the Downtown Eastside was, socially and economically-speaking, the poorest place I have ever visited in Canada, it was at the same time the most spiritually enriching, and my friends and I were grateful for the opportunity to leave our small mark there. That reading week was the most enjoyable of my university career.”