

### **Reflective Essay**

Growing up in an Indigenous family, I have come to appreciate the environment and the land in a very unique way. As humans, we take so much from the environment we will in, and I think that it's absolutely vital that we do what we can to give back to it. Unfortunately I believe that our society takes the land for granted, and we have now come to see the impacts of this through things such as global warming which is increasingly relevant as the years go on. Traditionally in my culture we believe in using the resources the land provides us with in a humane, holistic and gracious manner; This is a practice that I try to uphold when I can.

Of course, society was bound to modernize and change, and that was inevitable - not simply due to colonization. But I do often think about the practices of my culture and how incredibly environmentally sustainable they once were. For example, in order to communities to sustain themselves, they required protein and substance which often came in the form of an animal. Having said this, eating meat then was not taken for granted the same way a vast majority of us do now. When an animal was to be hunted and killed, it was viewed as a great offering from the creator, the world, and the environment. A prayer was made to the creator and thanks was given after the death of said animal. Every possible part of this animal was cherished and treated like a delicacy. The meat for for food, the skin for clothing or drums, the due for warmth, the bones for weapons and structures. This way of living life was sustainable, it was humane, it was inspiring to be honest. I have been fortunate enough to take part in learning opportunities both professionally and personally organized by Indigenous leaders who shared their beliefs and their understandings of Native history with regard to use of the environment. Although I have been raised with Indigenous blood, I wasn't raised knowing much of the history of my culture, so I am so grateful that I have gone out of my way to seek these learning opportunities out as I

feel it makes me not only a more well-rounded and educated individual but also a better nurse, especially being in a career which requires one to be open-minded, progressive and adaptable to the environments of which we work.

Things come so easily to us in this day, and I think that it is easy to forget that we are not entitled to this land, or to this world, and if we continue to treat it as such, we will inevitably lose it. I am embarking on a career that unfortunately produces a significant amount of waste, and I recognize that. Thus far as a student and as an employed student nurse, when possible I try not to overuse supplies unnecessarily, I try to remember to recycle packaging and launder what I can before throwing things such as soiled sheets away – these are simply a few things I try to keep in mind on a daily basis. On a larger level though, I do feel that nursing can be quite an environmentally sustainable career. After all, we are sustaining mankind, and ensuring that everyone lives with a great quality and quantities of life so that they can become active community members who play a part in hopefully bettering our world.

Much of my education in the nursing program has an underlying environmentally sustainable viewpoint. I have taken a large number of pathophysiology courses – learning how disease processes impact the body, how the environment impacts oneself and how this can all collectively impact our community. This is especially relevant in current times when we think of global pandemics such as COVID-19. Additionally, I have taken courses that consider both global and community health and the ways that external factors impact our health. I have learnt about natural disasters and how wildfires can effect the environment and the people living in it, how the World Health Organization's Social Determinants of Health such as lack of education, homelessness and poverty can impact one's health and ability to live, which in turn impacts our environment as well.

As I have mentioned in my course work for ENSU 1000, myself and friend co-founded the TRU UNICEF Club on campus for which I currently hold the Vice President position for. Our club not only recognizes and advocates for global health, but also addresses the environment and the importance of

treating it with respect. UNICEF has expressed the efforts they make to minimize their carbon footprint and support the health and sustainability of the environment, and I am proud to be a member of this organization for many reasons, one of which is just that.

I believe that the term 'environmental sustainability' is very broad and encompasses so much more than what one might first think. I know that when I hear that, my mind immediately goes to being 'green' and recycling. I think of oceans, and rainforests, and animals. And while of course it does encompass those things, it also encompasses so much more, even that on a molecular level like I have learned in my pathophysiology courses. My knowledge and my appreciation has grown so much in line with that of which I have displayed in my years growing up. For example, I started out displaying my interest in environmental sustainability in middle school by winning the Green Campaign for School District No.83 for creating a slogan, and while this is very relevant to being environmentally sustainable it also demonstrates my then surface level understanding of what being 'green' meant. Now, here I am, applying to be acknowledged as environmentally sustainable as a new-graduate and am able to express how much deeper of an understanding and appreciation I have for what that means to me, and recognizing that I still have so much to learn. Environmental sustainability is truly an important topic that I try to keep in mind in all sectors of my life, and I hope to bring this value into my profession as a working nurse in my career which is only just beginning.