

Sadie Lawrence

Tooo45474

ENSU 1000

Reflection Essay

---

There have been numerous opportunities and individuals who have significantly impacted myself and my decision to live a sustainable lifestyle. Over the years, I found myself in various circumstances relating to sustainability. My adoptive parents inspired me to care for our 'mother earth' and in return, 'mother earth' would provide for future generations. Once my academic journey began, I began to realize the importance of my eco-friendly upbringing. Growing up, I had the belief that it was my innate responsibility, as an Indigenous person, to care for the land. I now believe it is a shared responsibility for everyone, to care for the land and our planet.

Over the years, many experiences have shaped my outlook on life. At a young age, my family would go out onto the land to pick berries and gather herbs. Unfortunately, I was more concerned with eating the berries than actually learning the names and medicinal uses for the plants. Eventually, I became involved with a cultural practice known as "Sundance". This was my first experience harvesting sage - it was explained to me that we harvested only what was needed, and nothing more. I learned that giving back to the land is an absolute must. An Elder told me that we must always care and give back to the land, so that 'mother earth' will continue to provide for our future generations.

Before graduating from highschool, I attended a camp designed for students interested in taking the bachelor of natural resource science (NRSc) program at TRU. I signed up without realizing the lasting impression this camp would have on me. But sadly, at the time, I did not believe I had the capabilities of passing first year calculus, let alone the entire degree. After highschool graduation, I took a gap year and worked as a waitress in Kamloops. I began hiking more during my days off work and a newfound

appreciation for the outdoors was sparked. The restaurant closed, prompting me to head down to the administrator's office at Thompson Rivers University (TRU). As I recall, I did not have an exact career in mind -- however the administrators helped guide me in the right direction. And by “right direction” I mean they led me to John Karakatsoulis - the program coordinator for the NRSc program at TRU. I met with John and applied to the program, in person. I received my acceptance letter for the Fall and began my academic journey in the NRS program at TRU.

After graduating from highschool and taking a gap year, recycling and living sustainability were not high up on my list of priorities. I had forgotten everything my parents had worked so hard to ingrain into my very being -- no longer feeling that innate responsibility to care for the environment. My views had changed - I was now wasteful to the point of irresponsibility. During my first year, I moved in with a student from the Horticulture program. He inspired me with his commitment to living a sustainable lifestyle. As a former minimum wage worker and now a student, I had convinced myself that living a sustainable life was no longer economically feasible. However, my new living situation gave me new insight on ways to live more sustainably. Abstaining from buying food in bulk and lowering my water usage became my first goal. Eventually, my eating habits changed and making sustainably sourced food choices became easier. By making small changes to my life, it enabled me to stay committed to living a more sustainable life.

Through my employment with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) research facility in Summerland, I learned valuable skills in research and gained insight to sustainable practices for Canadian food production. The implications of climate change were widely talked about at the station, and the impacts it would have on Canadian agriculture. Changing temperatures would be detrimental on fruits and vegetables. The researchers I worked with hoped to mitigate the effects of climate

change by developing effective and sustainable practices for farmers and improving irrigation for water conservation. Producing new methods of management techniques will ensure a sustainable future in agriculture.

Seeing how the actions of a few people could actually make a change in the world was inspirational to me. Up to this point in my life, I never considered that, “Hey, maybe one person can make a difference ... and maybe that someone can be me?” The following two summers, I worked as a field technician for two different Secwepemc nations: Simpcw and Tk’emlups te Secwepemc. I gained valuable knowledge on the topography of a landscape. My skills in identifying native plants and tree species grew substantially. Although I had the same job in both offices, working in different terrain made the jobs vastly different.

For Simpcw, surveying a stand of trees before harvesting, was routine. Looking for evidence of Indigneous people pre-contact is difficult -- as they lived a semi-nomadic life. Often moving from place to place, leaving little indication they were ever there. Learning that millions of Indigenous peoples lived in Canada, leaving no destruction was inspirational. Combining traditional land management practices with current practices could ensure a sustainable future for land management objectives.

One day, I hope to combine my lived experience with my education. I hope to inspire Indigneous people into continuing their education. Having interprofessional relationships is key to the foundation of creating sustainability practices. Ensuring everyone has an equal say in regards to the environment, and having an understanding that there can be a sustainable choice in everything is important. After this reflection, I found that sustainability has been intertwined throughout my life, from my childhood to post-secondary career. I will always work on ways to allow for better sustainable practices to be put in place. Advocating and practicing sustainability practices will always be a priority in my life.