

ENSU 1000

Leadership in Environmental Sustainability

Reflective Essay

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Welcome to a reflection of my environmental sustainability journey; a path in which I intend to continue to improve and contribute throughout my future. The contents of this paper include the beginning of my thoughts on the environment, knowledge about environmental sustainability I have gained, and lastly, how I will carry sustainability forward in my life and career.

The start of my steps towards sustainability began at a young age, with some simple actions I learned to reduce, reuse, and recycle – yes, the iconic 3-R's. For example, in my household, when old fabrics like towels or clothes were at the end of their life, it was standard procedure to rip them up into cleaning rags (I remember I quite enjoyed the tearing and ripping part, it made me feel strong). We were also persistent in the routine of recycling and reusing; one-use plastic food containers, like sour cream tubs, could become new Tupperware. I think during this time, I started to recognize that not everything is immediately garbage. However small of action, the principles of reusing items and being conscious of recycling became apparent in my behavior. Later in life, I got my first job, a hostess in a chain restaurant. This brought about my first experience in the food industry and seeing how much waste it produces. A whole prime rib thrown away at the end of the night was a regular occurrence on slow shifts; it

seemed so unnecessary. I remember visiting Vancouver and driving past countless empty restaurants with a lit open sign and then thinking about how much food is thrown out *everywhere*. From this, I felt an uncomfortable feeling of guilt, for everybody. I believe this was the time when I started to realize the issue of excessive and unnecessary waste.

As a student in the Architectural and Engineering Technologist program at TRU, I understand more about excess in the building industry. The built environment that surrounds us accounts for an immense number of materials and energy demand. Carbon emissions are of concern in this realm. Large carbon emitting contributions in the production stage of buildings are a result of the process of material production, transportation, and construction. Additionally, the demand of energy to fuel our built environment produces more negative environmental impacts during the operational phase of buildings. Presently, the future of our climate is at the consequence for the state of our carbon emissions. This was made especially clear with the recent natural disasters we have faced so close to home. I was able to see the aftermath of the floods and fires through the lower Nicola firsthand during a summer co-op job surveying. Seeing the destruction gave insight into what is to come if we don't start taking the lead in environmental sustainability. However, there is not a singular

solution to saving the planet, I believe only collectively will we achieve sustainability.

Using my education, I will have the opportunity to advocate for more sustainable choices as I move forward into the building industry. I want to put forth more emphasis on the research of sustainable materials and explore more developments in material science. This will involve staying up to date and knowledgeable of new technologies and practices. As well as sourcing materials as locally as possible, to reduce the need for transportation. I plan to design efficiently and purposefully in my career, where there is no unnecessary waste of construction or excessive energy usage. The goal of the future building industry should be to achieve a built environment that is harmonious with our natural environment.

For me, the importance of making the choice to be more environmentally conscious is imperative to the world we face. I want to contribute what I have learned in a meaningful way, however large or small of action.