

**A Journey in Environmental Sustainability: A Reflection on Prior Knowledge,  
Perspective-Altering Experiences, and Future Aspirations**

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## **A Journey in Environmental Sustainability: A Reflection on Prior Knowledge, Perspective-Altering Experiences, and Future Aspirations**

Growing up in the rural town of Lillooet, BC, conversations on environmental sustainability were non-existent. This is not to say, however, that my family and I lived completely unsustainable lives. By simply living in a small town, we unknowingly engaged in various sustainable practices, such as biking or walking to work, taking the bus to school, raising our own chickens, or growing our own food in our backyard garden. While this is true, there were, and still are significant barriers for environmental sustainability in my hometown. A few of these barriers include that there are no recycling or organics collection services offered, you are required to travel to a larger city center to receive more advanced services, and conservative views prevent conversations about sustainability and climate change. While growing up in a small town did not necessarily inspire me to become a leader in environmental sustainability, it did provide me with the most important foundation for my journey: a deep connection to and love for the natural environment. In Lillooet, I was able to spend a large portion of my time outdoors, whether I was hiking with my dad, gardening, swimming and boating in local lakes, or learning about local plants and animals. This is all to say that although I have a deep connection to the environment from my upbringing, sustainability did not cross my mind at all growing up. Thankfully, my university experience has allowed me to learn so much more, changing my perspective, altering my actions, and inspiring me to teach others about environmental sustainability. A reflection on the experiences that altered my perspective, and my aspirations for the future based on what I have learned, illustrates my journey to becoming a leader in environmental sustainability.

### **Experiences That Have Altered My Perspective**

My experiences at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) have significantly shaped my understanding of, and actions towards environmental sustainability. When starting post-secondary studies, I was uneducated on environmental science and sustainability practices. However, after taking courses on earth system science, the impacts of climate change, climate action, and various sustainability practices for my Geography minor, my perspective and way of life changed completely. To start, I was more conscious of what I was buying, eating, and doing in my everyday life. I began to buy locally grown food when possible, I started exclusively

thrifting for my clothes, carpooling or walking to work and school, composting and recycling everything I could, making more sustainable choices in the products I was buying, and most importantly, I began to share my knowledge with others. Engaging in environmental sustainability myself, and educating family, friends, and my practicum students on the topic, were some of the first steps I took in becoming a leader of environmental sustainability.

The courses I have completed in the education program at TRU have also played a significant role in developing my ability to be a leader in environmental sustainability. It was through these courses that I learned about the connection between education and environmental stewardship. While taking the EDEF 3200: Theoretical Frameworks of Education course, I learned about the benefits of place-based education. In regard to environmental sustainability, I learned that using local landscapes as a foundation to study the different subjects can not only make learning more relevant and engaging, but can also give students a deeper appreciation and understanding of the world around them. These connections help to inspire environmental stewardship in students. Additionally, in the EDFN 4200: Indigenous Culture and Learning course that I took, I learned the importance of community and life-long learning for environmental sustainability. I now understand that finding success as a leader in environmental sustainability means that you find a community of people with shared goals that you can collaborate with, ask questions, learn from, and receive support from. It also means that you actively seek out new learning opportunities for yourself in order to expand your knowledge and develop your ability to act as a leader. It was also through the education program as a whole that I developed the belief that educators must have a solid understanding and passion for the subjects they teach in order to create an effective and engaging learning experience. This belief has inspired my aspirations for the future as a leader in environmental sustainability.

### **My Aspirations for the Future**

In the future, I plan on combining my passion for teaching with what I have learned about environmental sustainability, in order to encourage my students to engage in environmental stewardship. As I become an educator, I plan on implementing place-based education into my teaching practice, using project-based learning activities that focus on combating real-world environmental problems, integrating sustainability into different parts of the curriculum, modeling sustainability practices for my students, and adopting sustainable classroom practices. I also plan on developing a school eco-club. With the eco-club I hope to develop a school

composting program, build a school garden where students can learn about sustainable agriculture practices, organize community clean-up events or clothing swaps, and do educational campaigns within the community to raise awareness of sustainability practices. Through my dedication to integrating environmental sustainability into my teaching practice and developing initiatives such as an eco-club, I aim to lead by example and inspire the future generation to commit to environmental stewardship.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, my journey towards becoming a leader in environmental sustainability has been transformative. From being totally unaware of sustainability growing up, to completing a university education that has inspired me to educate others on sustainability, my perspective of environmental sustainability has significantly changed. I now aim to integrate sustainability into my teaching practice, inspire students to engage in environmental stewardship, and lead initiatives like eco-clubs.