



Reflective Essay

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I was raised in a house where nature and living things were highly valued. My father was a forester and my mother worked at a local vet clinic and a seasonal flower truck. From a young age I was taught the importance of our environment and the intrinsic value of living things. My family owns a cabin at a lake near my hometown, it's a place we go to get away from technology and the hustle and bustle of life in the "city", not that anyone would call our town a city. Here my brother and I learned common names of plants and animals, we learned how to fish and start a fire without matches, and we learned how vital and energizing a connection to the natural world can be. Regardless of this, or maybe because of it, I took our environment for granted, it never occurred to me how complex and fragile nature can be.

Up until I came to TRU, I also had very little understanding of what climate change was and how it impacts so many aspects of our lives. All I knew was that it was supposedly bad, though I heard many conflicting views, and that it was caused by CO₂ in our atmosphere. I never truly understood what it could change in my life or that of my family, and I had no idea how I could impact climate change.

Once I graduated from high school, I was still unsure where my life may take me. I applied to general sciences at TRU with the hope that I would find a way to work outside in the world I loved so much. After my first year I learned about the NRSC program offered at TRU and transferred into the program. During my course registration process, there was a mix up with what courses I was supposed to take, instead of Dendrology 1 (the study of trees), I ended up in a basic introduction to NRS class. This was probably the best thing that could have happened, even if I didn't need the class, it was one of the best learning experiences I have had in the program. I walked into that class thinking I knew a lot about nature, not everything of course but

I thought I had a fairly good grasp. I was wrong. This was a crash course of my NRS career. We talked about the good and the bad, fish and conflict management, agriculture and water, but the most memorable part, climate change. It was broken down and explained. Why was it called “global warming”? Why could this term be misleading even if it was accurate? What caused it other than CO₂ emissions? What could people do to change it? And the most chilling question, “where are we headed if we don’t slow it down”?

I entered the NRS program so that I could spend time in nature for a living, it never would have occurred to me that after that class, I wanted to be in the program so that future generations could experience nature the way I did as a child and not the way climate change would turn the world into. In the near future I am hoping to be employed with the Ministry of Forests to help ensure that our natural resources are being managed sustainability for future generations and in a way that is environmentally friendly. Although I hope to make a difference through my career, I believe that I can make a more substantial difference by bringing attention and educating individuals who do not have a background in natural sciences. As I discussed previously, I was lucky enough to be raised in a home that valued nature and understood its complexities, but even I did not truly comprehend how important sustainability is and how detrimental climate change can become.

I remember a discussion I once had with some extended family. It was shocking and disheartening. We were discussing the wildfires of 2017 and 2018. When the conversation turned to climate change and then to burning of fossil fuels and coal, they said, “I do not believe burning coal contributes at all to climate change”. I always knew that misconceptions about climate change were common, and that many people still did not believe it was an issue, but this

comment struck me. I would like to be the kind of person to educate those around me and prevent the spread of misinformation. In the future, I plan to encourage people to learn, to grow, and to share what they learn with others, but to ensure their information is based on sound facts and data before sharing. It is vital to double check information to ensure it is accurate, no matter the source and to make your own conclusions as well, or misinformation and lack of understanding only spreads. Ask questions, keep an open mind, and respect the opinion of others, even if it is different from your own. That is the only way we can grow and learn.