

I grew up in Crowsnest Pass, a small community located in rural Alberta. Growing up in this scenic mountainous environment fostered my love for the natural environment from a very young age. I spent much of my childhood outside, climbing trees and exploring the beautiful Turtle Mountain. When I turned eight, my family and I moved to Kamloops, another town dominated by greenery and the natural world. Throughout my life before University I always loved being outdoors and the wilderness, but never considered how my actions and humans actions overall could impact it. My parents never discussed the word sustainability with me and collectively we lived a very consumerist-dominated lifestyle. When I began attending University in September 2022, I was excited to be a University student, but I had no idea what path my education was going to take. My first year at TRU ended up being a collection of random classes; Theater, English, Astronomy, Economics, and Anthropology. I enjoyed many of these classes but still could not find a passion for something, something that inspired and excited me. This brings me to September 2023, when I took my first Geography course with Professor Crystal Huscroft, Geography 1000: Introduction to Earth System Sciences.

The education and knowledge I gained throughout the Geography 1000 course was invaluable. It was the first time in my life that I learned to view nature not only as something that simply exists, but as a complex system that influences and is influenced by human actions. From this moment forward I knew what direction I would take with my education and declared my major in the Geography and Environment studies program. I had found my passion, and began to understand that my love for the environment could be more than an appreciation rather it could become a fully integrated relationship where I could love and help the environment. I began changing my own lifestyle first; reducing my use of single use plastics, monitoring and reducing unnecessary spending and purchases, using city transit systems and sharing my knowledge with my family and friends in hope to encourage them to live a more sustainable lifestyle as well.

As I continued to pursue my education in Geography I stumbled upon an "Environmental Economics" class taught by Professor Stefania Strantza. As previously mentioned I took an Economics course in my first year of University, despite it fueling my passion, it still deeply interested me. I was fascinated by the way we assign a monetary value to everything, even things that realistically cannot be valued in simple monetary forms. Soon after attending Stefania's lectures I declared my minor in Economics. It became very clear to me how I could blend my two interests, using my knowledge of the Environment learned through Geography, and my knowledge of social science and resource allocation learned through Economics to make a difference in the world. To eventually aid in the creation of Economic policies that were both economically beneficial and simultaneously sustainable.

As I continued my education in Geography and Economics I realized that I did not have to wait until graduation to begin making a difference. I was already involved in the Geography club but I wanted to do more. This led me to take up a co-presidency with one of my peers Chris Pidlisecky, and together we have led the TRU Geography club since 2025. I also became a

Teaching Assistant (TA) for the Geography 1000 course, the course that inspired me to enter into the Geography program. I have been a TA for three lab sections throughout 2025-2026. In addition to these involvement I also began to use the knowledge I have gained throughout my degree to produce work that other students, academics, and the public could engage with. With the aid of an amazing Professor named Peter Tsigaris I created a commentary that showcases the Economic costs of climate change in the United States that is set to be published in Future Earth: A Student Journal on Sustainability and the Environment. All of these actions and accomplishments I have taken and made over the last three years have collaboratively shifted my way of thinking about environmental sustainability. Upon entering the Geography program I learned to understand that Environmental Sustainability comes from the actions taken by a society, that each individual plays a part in creating and maintaining a sustainable way of living and a sustainable future. But, as I took more initiative in my extracurriculars and in my studies, I came to understand that how our societies are managed, through governance and policy, is equally as important as individual actions. Therefore, as we continue to evolve and develop as a species with an extremely complex society, we must consider both individual actions, as well as collective actions.

Every step forward I have taken throughout my University experience has aided in shaping my understanding of our world, its importance and vulnerability, and the actions our societies must take to live sustainably and give future generations the opportunity to prosper in the world we leave behind for them. I have gained an in-depth knowledge of how our planet functions naturally and how we as a species influence it. I also understand the motives in which many societies function under, including incentives, subsidies, profit maxing, supply, demand, and the capitalist market system. I have developed skills that allow me not only to understand, but to tackle wicked problems like the climate crisis. I have become a capable researcher, leader, and academic. I plan to use my knowledge and abilities to pursue an education, and in the long-term, a position as an Environmental Economist. In this role I will be able to share my knowledge and use it to develop and implement sustainable policies and regulations that I hope will change our society, and in turn the livelihoods of our world's future societies for the better.

All names mentioned in this reflection inspired and aided in making me who I am today. I hold a deep gratitude for their perspectives on the world, their intelligence and their welcoming embrace that has allowed my passion towards creating a better world for my children to prosper.