

# **Toward a More Moral Environmentalism**

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

This paper explores the moral environmental differences between northern Europe and North America through the comparative lens of an indigenous and western perspective on moral environmentalism to demonstrate the similarities and disparities in how people view, behave, and consider the natural environment. By explicitly focusing on the Sámi and Anishinaabe indigenous groups, I will correlate their way of perceiving and interacting with the environment to the western non-indigenous mode of thinking to analyze the differences and similarities in the moral values held toward the environment. I will also argue that northern Europe and North America have inequitable policies for indigenous land and representation by alluding to regional differences in policy strategy and ethical standpoints on westernization. I aim to identify and examine how an individual's moral values are developed and the unique characteristics, such as culture, personal norms, or experience, that contribute to a person's perception of and involvement with nature. I will also address why individuals act in pro-environmental behavior and whether it is correspondingly developed from one's moral values, regional background, or as a relief for personal interest. Likewise, this study aims to determine if indigenous groups have always been aware of one's moral environmental impact, which refers to the moral and ethical effects on the environment caused by human activity, such as how a person views, respects, and engages with nature. Finally, this research also will assert how indigenous perspectives should be used as more extraordinary environmental conservation methods due to the stronger morals and principles they abide by with the

environment, which are defined by a holistic viewpoint that takes into account the interconnection of all natural living beings.

With the main component of this study being the different perspectives of moral environmentalism, I argue that individuals' moral values and perceptions of the environment simultaneously evolves from their personal norms, cultural upbringing, traditions, early childhood encounters with nature, and socialization with others. Moral environmentalism emphasizes an individual's moral obligation to protect the planet for future generations due to its notion of the environment being ethically relevant to humans (Berenguer 2010). Rather than perceiving nature as a commodity or pleasure to be confiscated for human activity, moral environmentalism shifts the values of the environment to accountability and deference. Moral environmentalism also acknowledges how nature provides humans with resources, influences our physical and mental health, and serves as a source of spiritual and aesthetic inspiration.

While moral environmentalism can be obtained and practiced throughout the course of development, an individual's personal norms, feelings of connectedness with nature, and environmental viewpoint, such as anthropocentric or ecocentric, play a critical role in acquiring these environmental values. An ecocentric view is foundational to moral environmentalism as it highlights the equivalent importance nature has with humans, thus placing an empathic and altruistic capacity on nature for itself and generating an increased moral feeling of ecological degradation responsibility. Yet, with the unique and diverse experiences with nature and social norms held in western and indigenous perspectives, the values and standpoints held toward the environment widely differ. In essence, the indigenous perspective often emphasizes balance and harmony

when living and caring for the natural environment due to the idea that all living beings are interconnected with humans. On the other hand, Western viewpoints are frequently predicated on the assumption that humans are distinct from and above the environment and that nature is controllable and exploitable for human consumption and advantage.

This research is necessary because it reveals the disparities in moral ideals between two opposing regions that each comprise westernized and indigenous perspectives of moral environmentalism. By outlining the variations and consequences moral values have on the treatment and interpretation of the environment in indigenous and western societies, individuals can attain an increased awareness of environmental conservation. This study is also essential as it accentuates and urges a shift from a western perspective to an indigenous perspective for ecological preservation, as the indigenous viewpoint underlines a more impactful spiritual and intellectual relationship between humans and nature due to their use of traditional ecological knowledge, which simultaneously can help influence more positive and considerate behavior toward the environment. Similarly, an increased appreciation and recognition of the indigenous views and values of moral environmentalism is vital to environmental protection because these individuals have the utmost admiration and consideration for the natural environment, which will be explored in chapter IV.

Additionally, this study is necessary as it aims to illuminate the different strategies regions employ to preserve their land, enabling people to understand the relationship that civilization has with nature, along with highlighting the unjustified policies that oppress indigenous peoples. Lastly, this research is essential as it aims to address how the various environmental policies and regulations connect to the moral standards of each region

regarding nature, as these standards impact how people value and behave toward the environment.

Following this chapter, Chapter II will examine the definition of moral environmentalism, its corresponding elements, how it is attained, and its effects on environmental conservation. Here, I will analyze individual interests, norms, and social aspects that structure people's morality and include philosophical references and perspectives on how morals are formed and imputed into people's lives. This research will allude to how moral environmentalism places intrinsic value on nature for itself and emphasizes the ethical obligations and values humans have to preserve the environment. I will relate how moral values are the ideas that hold the best or most appropriate consequences that are most important to society and, more specifically, the environment. I will also highlight that moral values are rooted in shared traditions in our social group, thus illuminating the differences between indigenous and western perspectives and customs they initiate with environmental protection. Fundamentally, this chapter will provide the baseline for understanding moral environmentalism and discern other factors contributing to pro-environmental behavior, such as personal relief, gratification, or emotional reactions.

Chapter III will focus on the Western perspective on moral environmentalism in northern Europe and North America. The main goal of this chapter is to address the central and lacking concepts of the westernized view of moral environmentalism and discrimination against indigenous communities and territories that advocate for protecting the planet. By comparing the environmental policies and laws in both regions, this chapter will demonstrate the western perspective that influences both negative and

positive environmental effects. I will shed light on the modes of thinking in western culture and their relation to behavior and views on the environment. This chapter will also explore how Western values of environmental protection may be improved and how increasing population, over-consumerism, and technological expansions implicate or define the westernized view of moral environmentalism.

In parallel, Chapter IV will discuss the indigenous perspective on moral environmentalism by defining the notions of thinking in indigenous communities that impact their relationships with and morals toward nature. I will argue that government officials in both regions overlook the human-environment relationships emphasized by Indigenous groups when distributing environmental responsibilities. The Sámi and Anishinaabe communities will be the foundation of this chapter, including the various legislation in northern Europe and North America that specifically mention these indigenous groups. I will address where Scandinavian legislature and policymakers publically regard and protect Sámi communities and where they neglect to include them. Likewise, I will assimilate the public policies in Canada that specifically focus on the Anishinaabe people. This chapter will also relate to the historical grievances and ethical values instilled in each indigenous group that, with increased knowledge and understanding by non-indigenous, can be used as new ecological measures to aid in environmental protection.

Chapter V concludes by comparing the western perspective of moral environmentalism with the indigenous viewpoint. This chapter will also explore the connections between the Sámi and Anishinaabe indigenous groups on their perceptions and customs in environmental appreciation and conservation. Yet, to understand the

moral and environmental relationship between the Sámi and Anishinaabe, we must first comprehend the individualistic and philosophical components of moral environmentalism.



## **Chapter II: Moral Environmentalism**

This chapter will define moral environmentalism, discuss ways to obtain it, and explore its consequences on environmental protection. Moral values evolve through the course of human development and ultimately influence how one engages, perceives, and considers the inanimate and animate objects around them, such as the natural environment (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020, pg 422). Pro-environmental behaviors and conservation acts coincide with an individual's moral values and stimulate a feeling of personal responsibility for environmental degradation. Likewise, a person's cultural background and customs, as well as early-life experiences encountered through the interaction with nature and socialization with people, influence what values a person will have explicitly toward the environment (Fränkel, 2019, pg 1). Additionally, personal norms, such as the moral obligations or expectations an individual feels in a distinct circumstance, impact moral environmental behavior as it constitutes a self-expectation to preserve nature (Berenguer, 2010). Undoubtedly, the development practice of ethical principles toward nature fundamentally coincides with pro-environmental behavior. However, I aim to shed light on the unique dynamics that often explain why people feel and distinctly choose to behave positively toward the environment, as in relation to moral environmentalism, and whether it be due to self-interest and relief, culture and personal values, or connectedness and appreciation to nature in general.

To understand moral environmentalism, it is essential to note the difference between the two environmental perspectives that determine an individual's moral values

and actions on the environment: anthropocentric and ecocentric. An anthropocentric motive considers that nature "should only be protected because of its convenience in enhancing the quality of life for human beings" (Berenguer, 2010). With this motive, individuals are less likely to engage in environmental preservation because of the belief that only humans have universal importance and intrinsic value.

By contrast, the ecocentric perspective recognizes that the environment has intrinsic value beyond the instrumental or goal-achieving values it provides humans, such as raw materials used for construction or aesthetically pleasing tourist-filled destinations. The ecocentric view of nature considers the environment to have value for its exact being and recognizes it as ethically relevant as humans. Inherently, an ecocentric viewpoint is a central component of moral environmentalism because it places an altruistic and empathic capacity on nature for its own good and interest (Berenguer 2010).

According to an ecocentric lens, environmental behavior stems from altruistic behavior, or a feeling of sympathy for the welfare of another being at the expense of oneself. Similarly, empathy, the fundamental act of sharing one's emotional experiences with another, can develop into sympathy and the desire to assist those in need (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020, pg 425). Equivalently, empathy can also demonstrate altruistic behavior, resulting in the moral obligations and values held for environmental protection. Emotional affinity and connectedness with nature also serve as essential sources of motivation for pro-environmental conduct. However, it is worth noting that the moral development of sympathy allows the feeling of connectedness with nature.

Other moral emotions, such as shame, guilt, or pride, influence protective actions on the environment as an individual will feel guilty when not engaging in sustainability

actions like recycling or waste reduction or feel pride when doing the opposite. While these emotions can essentially influence positive actions toward the environment, it is questionable whether these actions are achieved from altruism toward nature itself or to simply satisfy a feeling of personal relief from culpable environmental damage caused by human activity.

As described above, empathic and altruistic behavior directly correlates with an individual's self-expectations and motivations for conservation. Since altruism and empathy go hand-to-hand with ecocentric motives and protection, it is essential to answer how these values and behaviors are obtained. By referencing the "Norm Activation Model of Altruism" (Schwartz, 1977), which has had the most considerable impact on how environmental attitudes and values are explained, environmental behavior begins with an approach of a "valued other in need." The perception of a "valued other in need" emphasizes the self-managed expectations of rewards for helping in a situation, such as pride or enhanced self-esteem, and penalties for not helping, like guilt or self-depreciation (Berenguer, 2010). Hence, people use recyclable bags or bottles for the personal satisfaction of easing human-caused degradation. The internal reaction to alleviating environmental destruction depends on whether one's norms or motives are complied with, along with the altruistic value orientation an individual has, such as anthropocentric and ecocentric. Overall, the "valued other in need" perspective elucidates the altruistic motivation in environmental preservation by highlighting the factors that influence such behavior, such as an individual's social and personal norms, degree of responsibility assigned to oneself, and awareness of the effects of behavior on the welfare of nature.

While the "valued other in need" approach analyzes the factors contributing to altruistic and conserving behavior toward the environment, I argue that this method emphasizes egoistic motives as the primary reason for helping. Expanding on the idea that individuals have an altruistic orientation that is either ecocentric or anthropocentric, an extended model has been presented by Stern and associates that distinguishes further value orientations individuals can have, such as egoistic, socio-altruistic, and biospheric motives. This extended model, called the value-belief-norm theory (Stern, 2000), indicates that individuals can incorporate all three orientation values, which are then used to differentiate what beliefs the individual will have on the adverse effects of environmental deterioration, on humans in general, and other inanimate natural elements. According to the value-belief-norm theory, personal norms for preserving the environment are grounded on 'biospheric value orientations,' which include having an appreciation of the natural environment in itself" (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020). Similarly, the value-belief theory notes that behaviors are more likely to occur if people think that their activity protects crucial environmental characteristics from harm, thus indicating the incorporation of both egoistic and biospheric values.

Although emotional reactions of guilt and pride can significantly contribute to an individual's aid in environmental conservation, researchers have further argued that anger, distress, or discomfort are seemingly more provoking in causing pro-environmental behavior (Kollmuss et al., 2010, pg 255). Anger, sadness, or disgust often are more potent in triggering an enhanced sense of moral obligation and willingness to take action in environmental issues (Li et al., 2022). This is due to rage being considered an "action-oriented emotion" and one of the most powerful indicators of participation in

collective environmental action. Likewise, an individual's propensity to mobilize against the cause of such disadvantage is strongly influenced by their anger in response to perceived injustice (Panno et al., 2021, pg 856). Therefore, anger or sadness may serve as more potent catalysts for pro-environmental conduct, as guilt often solely leads to feelings of helplessness and can seemingly be examined as an unproductive emotion when taking action.

Consequently, an essential factor for environmental action is locus control, which reflects a person's belief regarding whether or not they can affect change through their own actions. Thus, those with a secure internal locus of control are more likely to act in ecological conservation as they believe their behaviors can influence change. Conversely, those with an external locus of control believe that only strong individuals can effect change and that their activities are meaningless (Kollmuss et al., 2010, pg 243). We can argue that individuals with more rageful reactions towards environmental degradation and a strong internal locus control have more effective actions on environmental protection as the person is more confident and driven in their initiative for change as they recognize and understand what their impact can have on nature. Similarly, more remarkable environmental preservation is achievable as a sense of motivation and empowerment is generated from infuriated reactions and a strong locus of control, and drives individuals to take practical actions towards environmental protection due to the belief that the individual has the power and obligation to shape environmental outcomes through their actions and decisions (Kollmuss et al., 2010, pg 256).

Equivalently, environmental justice and emotional reactions of anger coincide with pro-environmental behavior and moral environmentalism. A study conducted on

German citizens by Reese and Jacob (2015) "found that beliefs about environmental justice elicit people's moral anger toward environmental damage that, consequently, promotes their pro-environmental intentions and actions" (Panno et al., 2021, pg 856). According to environmental justice, all individuals should receive equal protection from environmental damage, regardless of their economic, social, or political status (Gerhard & Lisa, 2015). Therefore, the minority or low-income populations that are frequently and disproportionately affected by environmental degradation deserve equal protection and access to resources and aiding care as privileged communities. Likewise, when individuals witness communities with few resources being disproportionately impacted by environmental damage, resulting in a lack of clean air and water, health problems, and the loss of livelihoods, they are evoked in anger and rage and due to the inequalities and injustices observed. (Gerhard & Lisa, 2015) Correspondingly, we can affirm that the emotional reaction of anger initiates the belief that environmental degradation should not be allowed to punish those who are already disadvantaged and ultimately helps motivate people's moral outrage toward ecological damage.

Moreover, personality traits have an additional impact on human emotion and can influence social norms, an individual's morality, and environmental intentions. A study directed on healthcare employees in Fujian compared extroverted and introverted personality traits to determine the differences in environmental behavior. Researchers found that employees with extroverted personality traits were able to accept supervision and direction more readily and primarily followed the social norms of the group, which allowed improper behaviors among group members to be easily counseled and improved, and thus presented subtle pro-environmental behavior (Huang & Lin, 2020).

Alternatively, this case found that healthcare workers with introverted personality traits were less likely to comply with the social norms of the group yet displayed more remarkable pro-environmental behavior as their traits "present [a] stronger belief in self-improvement of [the] environment" (Huang & Lin, 2020). According to Karatepe and Avci (2017), people with external control personality traits would demonstrate better behavioral performance due to environmental protection rules and regulations, yet would not actively engage in activities and were less adept at solving environmental issues than people with internal control personality traits. Additionally, Liu et al. (2017) indicate that those with external control and negative perspectives under passive supervision and social norm management will typically display pro-environmental conduct out of fear of punishment and public beliefs. Contrarily, those with internal control personality traits were accustomed to actively absorbing new environmental knowledge and exhibiting pro-environmental conduct, which meant that unfavorable societal norms and rules had less impact on them. With these discoveries on health care workers in Fujian, we can argue that extroverted and introverted personality traits both play a remarkable role in permitted pro-environmental behavior, yet vary in characteristics that contribute to positively behaving toward the environment.

Nevertheless, a significant component of moral environmentalism includes feeling connected with nature, as it pertains to a person's association and experience with the natural environment on an emotional and cognitive level (Wyles et al., 2017). Seemingly, there is a link between individuals with continual experience with nature to incorporating a higher connection to the environment, due to the meditative elements and senses of being part of something grander than oneself, such as feeling bonded with

nature. Likewise, connection with the environment is a result of biophilia, which is "a basic need and propensity to affiliate with life in general [such as nature]" (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020, pg 425). Biophilia emphasizes the human tendency and desire to experience nature with our five senses, understand and comprehend natural phenomena, and connect with our environment by using spiritual elements to transcend with the natural world (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020, pg 426). With this, individuals are more prone to have pro-environmental behaviors and hold higher morals towards nature due to feelings of connectedness to nature. Uniformly, rage and sadness coexist with connectedness with nature as it arouses a need and passion to protect the natural world from the awareness and feelings of devastation in face of the prevailing environmental challenges. Biophilia, discomfort, and empathy also serve similar functions in moral environmentalism as they answer why individuals act in pro-environmental behaviors and highlight the overall appreciation for nature in itself. Unfortunately, there has been a decline in enjoyment and desire for connectedness in adolescents, especially in Westernized industrial societies, because of the uncontrolled promotion of consumerism and the desire to associate and engage with peers in urbanized settings rather than nature, which will be further elaborated on in chapter three.

Before continuing, the evolution of environmental ethics and deep ecology should be briefly considered to enhance the understanding of moral environmentalism. Beginning with environmental ethics, which acknowledges that nature has intrinsic value and uses the moral approaches of virtue theory, consequentialism, and deontology when discussing the interaction of humans with the environment. Per environmental ethics, virtue theory assesses behaviors, procedures, and regulations to determine whether they



will demonstrate or attain virtue. Primarily, virtue ethics concentrates on an individual's notable character traits that are considered virtuous, such as compassion, humility, or environmental sensitivity (Palmer et al., 2014). However, this theory can be challenging as the values considered virtuous vary between individuals, especially those with an anthropocentric perspective. Nonetheless, recognizing and focusing on one's character is essential for resolving our ecological problems as it allows for greater awareness of the consequence of their actions and allows the person to act in their highest good when making decisions toward others and the environment.

Additionally, consequentialism emphasizes that an individual's behaviors or values should initiate the best possible consequences. Consequentialism concentrates on considering the entire outcome and choosing the course of action with the most optimal anticipated results. With moral environmentalism and environmental ethics, consequentialism focuses on what constitutes favorable behavior and action toward nature. It can be concluded as a biocentric or holistic view that aims to maximize environmental restoration efforts and minimize humankind's destruction. In contrast, deontology argues that maximizing the good is not the only important factor in environmental protection in some cases. Likewise, instead of considering the consequences of an action, deontology considers whether the action is morally right or wrong, following the specific set of norms and principles an individual may have. Deontology also recognizes that individuals may need to refrain from maximizing the good in environmental actions, especially when doing so would compel them to act unjustly or cause further interference with ecological issues that do not benefit or harm individuals personally. For instance, maximizing the efforts to provide food for animals

in times of food desperation can eventually result in altering the original ecosystem structure. It could also generate future harm as animals are likely to develop instincts to return to the area of feeding when measures eventually return to normal or end up entirely relying on this feeding source when individuals eventually stop. Concerning moral environmentalism, deontology places a responsibility on individuals to respect each living being and allows people to differentiate which choice might be more morally beneficial than another by acknowledging the negative consequences that can arise from maximizing greater organismic success.

While environmental ethics defines the decisions and moral values between the relationships between humans and nature, deep ecology aims to alter individuals' perspectives and actions by defining philosophical concepts to improve pro-environmental behavior. Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess originated deep ecology and addresses preserving untouched nature and returning deteriorated land to its pure and undamaged state. Essentially, Naess urges immediate action on environmental protection to ensure a healthy and secure environment for future generations as he emphasizes placing intrinsic value on all living beings. Deep ecology also urges for switching the environmental movement from an anthropocentric to a biocentric viewpoint. As previously discussed, an anthropocentric view, which is the belief that humans are the most crucial entity, has often been a recurring theme in Western philosophy. (Guha & Martinez Alier 1997).

One of Naess' main principles to deep ecology is stressing the need to alter the ideologies that pursue increasing living standards to ideologies that seek to enhance the quality of life (Drengson, 2010). According to Naess, enhancing the quality of life is

crucial to human flourishing, as individual social, spiritual, and emotional well-being holds more significance than material goods or economic gain.

Additionally, Naess advocates for gaining a more vital awareness of the interconnection humans have with all living beings and the significance of recognizing and protecting the rights of species that otherwise cannot advocate for themselves (Breivik, 2019, pg 67). Furthermore, environmentalists, including Arne Naess, have illustrated the demand to alter the way individuals decide on government policy, as the nation needs to shift its priorities from a strict concentration on economic efficiency to the social ideals like justice, equity, and spirituality, as environmental issues are often intertwined with these principals. (Motts, 2017, pg 151). Likewise, deep ecology focuses on answering the more profound questions involving specific environmental concerns that can only be answered through wisdom from environmentalists' analysis. Often, questions regarding ecological damage typically fall under categories of economic or ethical debate. In contrast, deep ecology addresses societal assumptions by questioning whether "present society fulfills basic human needs like love and security and access to nature" (Motts, 2017, pg 161). With this, deep ecology explicitly questions which organizations are useful to all forms of life on earth, including the environment, religion or education, and what changes need to be implemented to increase the welfare of life for all beings (Motts, 2017, pg 161).

Regarding moral environmentalism, deep ecology comparably foregrounds the need for a moral framework that involves an ecocentric perspective to improve biotic integrity and help enable people to strengthen or modify their true values or interactivity with nature. The moral framework of deep ecology is centered on the notion that all

living beings and ecological communities have intrinsic value, and individuals have the moral responsibility to respect and preserve it. Ultimately, deep ecology affirms the moral value and worth of all living things and their right to live and thrive. In parallel with moral environmentalism, the bond between people and nature and their duty to protect it are at the center of this comprehensive approach to environmentalism. Deep ecology emphasizes the interconnection of all life forms and inspires individuals to find methods to coexist peacefully with the environment. It also encourages people to form a personal connection with nature and to value it for what it is on its own terms. Consequently, this ideology is crucial for environmental protection because it emphasizes conserving ecological balance rather than solely protecting natural resources for human consumption.

As previously discussed, personal norms for environmental protection are based on "biospheric value orientations" that stimulate a personal responsibility to preserve nature. "For Schwartz (1977), a personal norm is a self-expectation of a specific action in a particular situation that is experienced as a feeling of moral obligation" (Berenguer, 2010). While personal norms often contain anthropocentric motives due to the self-centered perspective individuals place on themselves, they are regarded as one of the best indicators of exercised pro-environmental behavior as it elicits self-assessed moral emotions, such as remorse or fulfillment, and arouses feelings of accountability to ecological suffering (Stern, 2000). In addition, individuals follow their personal norms when making decisions about aiding in environmental protection based on the self-expectations of helping and alignment with other moral values like appreciation and connectedness to nature.

Researchers are still determining at what stage of development personal environmental protection norms are formed. However, Psychologist Sandra Waxman interpreted that infants can morally comprehend the natural environment through apprehending the difference between inanimate and animate objects, which allows the concept development of animals. Waxman also illuminated that younger children can attain moral values such as fairness or caring when interacting with toys with animalistic elements. With these findings, it can be determined that infants have the capacity to perceive the elements of the natural world morally, especially towards animals, due to the exchange of their moral values on inanimate and anthropomorphous toys. Additionally, the moralization and concept of nature that children achieve from development will likely generate long-term effects on their moral commitment and consideration of the environment.

Psychologist Michael Pratt and his associates used a personalized approach to examine adult pro-environmental activism. Their results found a decline in pro-environmental behaviors, including recycling or conservation efforts in adolescents in the United States, Canada, and Israel. The decline in protective actions on the environment in areas like the United States is presumptively due to the growing industrial and technological advances which stimulate continuous exposure "to the powerful influence of a youth culture [which] strongly promotes unrestrained consumerism as opposed to a sustainable lifestyle of environmental responsibility" (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020). Conjointly, Americans can effortlessly access the natural riches of vast areas of the region because of their intense economic and political power. Thus, placing less of an emphasis on environmental regulation and preservation due to the economic and political

gain of "simultaneously enjoy[ing] the material benefits of an expanding economy and the aesthetic benefits of unspoilt nature." (Guha & Martinez Alier, 1997). At the same time, in Canada, psychologist and researcher "Krettenauer (2017) reported moderate positive correlations between self-evaluative emotions of guilt and pride and pro-environmental behavior in a sample of Canadian adolescents" (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020). That is, feeling disgraceful when not engaging in waste reduction, water conservation, or recycling versus feeling gratification when doing the contrary. Nevertheless, further elaboration on the different environmental behaviors in Northern America and Europe will be explored in the following chapters.

Nonetheless, the development of personal norms and moral values often heavily depends on the culture an individual was raised in and the customs incorporated into their life. A social ontogenetic perspective (Nsamenang, 2006) can be used to highlight that "there are universal biological mechanisms underlying children's psychological development that are tuned differently depending on the particular culture and its practices" (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020 pg 422). This perspective acknowledges the distinctive role culture plays on an individual's perspectives, values, and interaction with the environment by highlighting the social ecology of one's background. Yet, with a focal point on cultural background, the social ontogenetic perspective neglects to recognize the universal moral principles, such as utilitarianism, categorical imperative, or rights and justice theory, that also notably influences an individual's perceptions and behaviors toward the environment (Cohen, 2001, pg 578). While it can be applied that cultural background helps contribute to the moral values held toward the environment, it is critical for all countries and cultures to agree and abide by the same universal principles

to ensure every individual is working towards the same goal of environmental protection. Along with that, these universal principles frequently act as frameworks for collaboration and global accountability between different nations and people to ensure that the environment is being safeguarded.

Moreover, morality plays a significant role in the development of political attitudes, which impacts how individuals behave and engage in society and how a person will view and respond to environmental degradation. With the increasing industrial development and population, there has been a growing concern to reevaluate the impact morality has on an individual's political attitudes toward the devastating conditions being executed in the natural environment. Similarly, when people's attitudes are grounded in morality, they become entangled with instinct and emotions, which compels them to believe that such a mindset is appropriate (Feinberg & Willer, 2012). Correspondingly, well-developed countries, like the United States, typically intersect morals with their laws, which can increase sustainability awareness because "when environmental law reflect[s] moral values for betterment, legal adoption is more likely successful" (Li, R.Y.M. et al., 2021). Therefore, more significant political reforms, primarily in well-developing countries, need to be implemented on environmental protection as it can aid in generating an increased development of moral values and appreciation of nature and advance the use of pro-environmental behaviors.

Although environmental attitudes can play a significant role in moral environmentalism and pro-environmental actions, behavior is often "influenced by the interplay between attitude strength and the thresholds of a specific situation" (Heberlein, 2012, pg 57). Therefore, while an individual can have positive beliefs toward the

environment, it also takes specific circumstances and a powerful attitude to surmount difficult ecological obstacles. According to Heberlein, weak attitudes will typically show in one's behavior when the obstacles are easier to overcome, which then contributes to less emphasis on action. Research has also revealed that pro-environmental conduct is correlated with environmental attitudes, "but only when the attitudes are very strong—that is, when people believe the environment should be protected, even if doing so is expensive" (Casaló and Escario, 2018 pg 162). Although these predictions noticeably vary between cultures and societal backgrounds, researchers argue that environmental attitudes must be accompanied by a robust commitment to changing behaviors and taking sustained action to properly succeed in modifying their environmental behavior. These behaviors can range from minor decisions, such as reducing the use of plastic, to more extensive actions, like participating in one's local clean-up day. Fundamentally, for individuals to make these decisions, they must have a vital environmental attitude that drives them. Without an assertive environmental attitude, it is unlikely that any pro-environmental behaviors would occur.

In addition to environmental attitudes, an individual's interactions with the natural environment ranges between cultures as various meanings of 'place' are associated with one's environment or homeland to coincide with their values. William and Patterson (1996) have proposed "four categories of place meaning," beginning with intrinsic and aesthetic meaning, where people respond emotionally to gorgeous scenery, and cultural meaning, which encapsulates an area's historical and geographical aspects. Continuing with emotional or individualistic meaning that demonstrates the degree to which a person personally identifies with a location (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020, pg 432). Lastly, the



"traditional Anglo-American" concept displays an anthropocentric outlook by emphasizing that the primary function of a place, like an environment, is to satisfy a human need through its goal-achieving significance.

While the notion of "place" can vary between cultures, the meanings described above are most prominent in westernized societies compared to indigenous societies. In indigenous communities, individuals encompass a vital biocentric perspective from exposure to a greater wildlife diversity than non-indigenous people (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020, pg 432). Similarly, indigenous people's values on nature are significantly different from those of non-indigenous or westernized cultures. For instance, indigenous individuals value the land's sanctity and spiritual significance to each person and the tribe together. They have a deep connection and a sense of "place" with the land from its history and past generations. Equivalently, indigenous people value passing down traditions to generations through oral narratives, which beneficially allows native children to continue the costumes of protecting and perceiving the land respectfully (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020, pg 433).

Most importantly, indigenous societies recognize that people and the environment are not separate entities but, instead, interdependent (M. Kyle Matsuba et al., 2020, pg 432). With the cultural and sacred significance of the natural environment and interdependence with the land, indigenous individuals ultimately have higher morals about the environment and its protection. Furthermore, by viewing nature as equivalent and interdependent of humans, indigenous individuals are less likely to participate in activities contributing to ecological deterioration and instead practice honorable and sustainable methods when achieving goal-oriented meaning from the land.

In addition, by relating to the findings from Waxman, many researchers presume that indigenous children have greater exposure to and knowledge of environmental elements. For example, the Menominee children, studied by researcher Coley and associates, were found to not primarily impose anthropomorphic characteristics on toys as other non-indigenous do. This is because many native children, such as the Menominee, appear to interact with a wider variety of living things, such as animals or plants, compared to non-native children, who predominantly surround themselves with other humans or, if any, domesticated animals (Coley et al., 2002). Perhaps with this diverse exchange with other lifeforms, indigenous children develop a higher ecocentric perspective than non-indigenous from connecting with and viewing nature as an entity that needs to be equally valued and protected. Indigenous people also presumably do not use the feeling of "personal relief" as the purpose of their sustainability actions like many westernized individuals. Instead, their values and appreciation of nature are typically deep-rooted into their culture, from viewing the land as invariably relevant to humans and obtaining a personal and moral obligation to respect and safeguard the environment. Further evaluation and explanation of western and indigenous perspectives on the moral environment are also concluded in chapters three and four.

Since moral emotions, personal norms, and culture have been highlighted as factors of the values held toward the environment, it is critical to discuss how morality impacts individuals' behaviors, specifically concerning pro-environmental actions. Morality plays a pivotal role in correlating what is considered right or wrong to each individual and influences how one chooses to care for or view ecological destruction. Although individuals may differ in perspectives on what is deemed as right or wrong,

researchers have evaluated idealism and relativism by using the Ethics Position Theory (Forsyth, 1980) to help distinguish why individuals might act in pro-environmental behaviors. With idealism, individuals consider moral behavior to have direct and positive impact on their actions as they believe that their decisions should never cause harm to others; [and] desirable consequences can always be obtained with the right action” (Zaikauskaitė et al., 2020). Thus, individuals with higher idealistic orientations have a greater pretension to engage in pro-environmental behaviors and notice the repercussions of human activity on nature, due to confidently believing their moral actions will have immediate and favorable effect on environmental preservation. On the contrary, those with relativistic orientations reject the idea that moral judgments should always adhere to general moral principles, and should instead take into account the situation's complexity, the surrounding circumstances, and the individuals involved. People with high relativism, therefore, do not attain as much ambition to engage in pro-environmental behaviors because they do not believe moral values and beliefs are universal or absolute (Zaikauskaitė et al., 2020). These universal moral values can range from seeking justice to individuals to “caring for other living things and the environment” (Kinnier et al., 2000).

Environmental behavior is also connected to an individual's sense or consciousness of identity. For instance, selfless people, such as those who place others before themselves, are "more likely to feel moral obligations toward the environment" (Feinberg & Willer, 2012). Individuals will also perceive pro-environmental behavior as morally righteous the more they are aware of the effects of environmental deterioration and the more they feel personally accountable for such destruction. With this,

pro-environmental behavior is considered a type of prosocial moral action that necessitates putting the needs of the natural environment above one's own strictly defined self-interest, both for the ecosystem's sake and future generations. Uniformly, pro-environmental behavior can also involve actions that are committed out of personal-interest, such as saving money on energy bills by reducing the amount of electricity used. In short, pro-environmental behaviors can consist of both ecocentric and anthropocentric motives, as preserving the environment essentially benefits nature itself and human well-being.

To summarize, moral environmentalism relates to how one treats the environment, the values one holds to nature, its consequences on environmental protection and pro-environmental behavior, and most specifically, the morality individuals place on the natural environment. Ultimately, moral environmentalism elucidates why individuals respond and behave to nature and environmental suffrage from the morals and internal principles held in themselves. Although personal norms, social emotions and reactions, internal motives, environmental attitudes, and cultural background influence the moral values held toward the environment. By emphasizing an empathetic and altruistic capacity for the environment, feeling a connectedness with nature, and using an ecocentric perspective, individuals are increasingly prone and obliged to act in pro-environmental behaviors. In order to comprehend how environmental morals, and corresponding ecological response, varies between cultures and regions, the subsequent chapter will discuss the western perspective on moral environmentalism, which will correlate to the impact it has on environmental value orientation and the policies that follow and contribute to environmental behavior.

### **Chapter III: Western Moral Environmentalism**

This chapter examines the Western perspective of moral environmentalism, exploring the historical roots of its development and its effect on environmental and indigenous degradation, especially on the Sámi and Anishinaabe groups, to highlight the negative consequences of the Western focus on economic growth and technological progress, which often come at the expense of traditional ways of life and the natural environment. Scholars may disagree on what constitutes the West. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I will use the following definition of the western perspective by contending that the foundation of environmentalism is the notion that nature is a resource that people may use to fulfill their desires and needs, as most ecological concerns “often have been politically marginalized by powerful economic, social, or national security interests” (Meyer, 2001, p. 21). This thesis also asserts that the western perspective primarily contains anthropocentric motives for aiding in environmental conservation, such as preserving natural resources or habitats for human use and economic interests (Guha & Nixon, 2013, p. 410). This chapter will argue that the western perspective has a long road to achieving a truly sustainable relationship with the environment, along with highlighting some of the positive steps that have been taken in Northern Europe and Northern America and the reasons for addressing these concerns. Likewise, this section will investigate why the western world has been stagnant in adopting renewable environmental practices, including the impact of capitalism and the belief that humans are dominant over nature.

While it is worth noting that environmentalism has favored the adoption of the new ecological worldview, which is similar to the indigenous perspective of recognizing the intrinsic value in non-human beings and the interconnectedness between all living things, there has often been an extreme hesitancy in fully implementing this worldview, as Western moral environmentalism has traditionally been impacted by dualistic and derivative thinking (Meyer, 2001, p. 35). Dualistic thought tends to separate humans from nature and see the natural world as a resource for human advantage (Meyer, 2001, p. 38). Dualism can be problematic in environmentalism because it can often result in an anthropocentric worldview in which nature is considered inferior to humans and as something to be distinguished from them. Dualistic thinking may also lead to the exploitation and depletion of natural resources and a disregard for the welfare of species other than humans. Additionally, a dualistic understanding of the world has ultimately aided in causing environmental degradation, a lack of care for the welfare of non-human species, and a disrespect for the fundamental value of non-human life, as people are regarded as distinct from and superior to nature.

Another reason for this reluctance to adopt the new ecological worldview is because of the idea that the western perspective and “political thought has been naturalistic all along, in the sense that “nature” has been the touchstone of legitimacy for social and political authority... [that has been] misguided” (Meyer, 2001, p. 36). Historically, the naturalistic Western worldview has been ingrained in political philosophy and social structures and has long seen nature as a resource to be exploited for human advantage for economic and diplomatic gain. Moreover, the “history of Western colonialism and industrial development has benefited only a tiny elite while exacting

tremendous social and environmental costs” (Guha & Nixon, 2013, p. 418).

Correspondingly, the unequal distribution of benefits and costs associated with the history of Western colonialism and industrial development have often been enjoyed by the narrow elite, while the costs have been borne disproportionately by marginalized communities and the natural world. Arguably, the naturalistic Western worldview displays a facade as it presents a distorted view of the relationship between humans and nature, portraying nature as a resource to be exploited for human benefit rather than as a complex, interconnected system in which humans are just one part. In addition, this facade has allowed for the continued exploitation of natural resources and the marginalization of indigenous communities and their traditional ways of life.

This naturalistic interpretation of Western social and political philosophy is typically referred to as a derivative account, as it derives or comes from a particular conception or understanding of nature (Meyer, 2001, p. 36). In other words, how people understand and relate to the natural world shapes how they organize and govern their societies. Contrary to moral environmentalism, this naturalistic interpretation of Western social and political philosophy prioritizes human interests and views nature as a resource to be used and utilized for human benefit rather than recognizing the intrinsic value of non-human life and the interconnectedness of all living things. Similarly, derivative viewpoints can be problematic because they frequently ignore the fundamental causes of environmental deterioration, such as economic and political systems that put sustainability last and promote expansion and profit.

While most consider the start of the beginning stages of the western perspective to arise from the increasing rise in industrialization, it initially occurred more than 200 years

ago in the tropics, during the 15th and 16th-century discoveries and voyages of the Caribbean islands by Christopher Columbus and Ferdinand Magellan (Grove, 1992). After uncovering these exotic and utopian lands, international trade, exploitation of resources, colonization, and land use for philosophical reasons occurred and resulted in the mass destruction of the environment due to the "growing social leverage and often radical agenda of the scientific lobby of the time" (Grove, 1992). Essentially, the explorations and voyages in the late 15th century launched the western perspective of moral environmentalism as the thirst for knowledge and excitement of unexploited land drove the excessive force and evacuation of ecological damage and indigenous groups from the colonizers' belief of finding paradise and utilizing natural riches for economic gain. Similarly, although growing infrastructure from the Industrial Revolution and increasing modernization of technological advances have gravely damaged and limited the natural world from returning to its pristine state, the acts of colonization, administration of machinery, and the desire to explore new and unspoiled land in the late 15th and 16th centuries, severely contributed to the beginning of this anthropocentric and western perspective of environmentalism.

Additionally, contemporary neoliberalism has played a significant role in the Western perspective of moral environmentalism, as it is characterized by a focus on economic growth and individual freedom, which can often lead to a neglect of environmental and social concerns of minority or indigenous groups (McCarthy & Prudham, 2004). Neoliberalism emphasizes free-market capitalism and places a high value on economic growth and wealth accumulation, which is "discursively repackaged in the image of homo-economicus, the ideal, entrepreneurial, self-made individual"



(McCarthy & Prudham, 2004). With this, neoliberalism's focus on individual liberties and rights can often result in a lack of shared accountability for environmental preservation, as it places personal interests ahead of the community's welfare. The neoliberal approach to environmentalism is also based on a core conviction in the value of free markets and individual liberty that promotes market-based solutions above direct involvement from the government.

By emphasizing the liberation of trade through free markets, neoliberalism has considerably affected the perspective of western moral environmentalism by prioritizing short-term economic gains over long-term environmental concerns. For instance, deregulation and privatization are frequently encouraged by neoliberal policies, which can result in the exploitation of natural resources and environmental destruction for the benefit of profit. (McCarthy and Prudham, 2004). The extraction of fossil fuels for mining or the logging of old-growth forests without consideration for their long-term ecological effects or damage to indigenous communities are also prime examples of the impact of neoliberalism, which will be examined further in this chapter. On the other hand, it is crucial to note that not all neoliberal supporters disregard environmental issues, as some that market-based approaches, such as carbon pricing or emissions trading, can be powerful instruments for encouraging environmental conservation while yet preserving economic growth. However, as opposed to neoliberal ideas of limited government interference, moral environmentalists may call for more government control and oversight to safeguard sustainability, protect the environment, and balance environmental preservation and economic expansion.

Parallel to neoliberalism, modernism is grounded in colonial and eurocentric tendencies emphasizing individualism, employment creation, industrialization, and export-led development (Rostow, 1960). Modernism has equated to the western perspective of moral environmentalism due to its negative impact on the natural environment from the emphasis on economic growth, technological progress, and individualistic and market-driven practices. Political scientist James C. Scott describes modernism as relating to "a strong belief in science and technology as carriers of economic expansion, growing satisfaction of human needs and a rational design of the social order" (Vandevyvere & Heynen, 2014). With this, capitalist modes of production and industrialization are typically favored as it assumes that economic benefits would trickle in a top-down manner to drive economic development. Furthermore, regarding the western perspective, top-down approaches to environmental management, where experts and policymakers decide how to use and conserve natural resources most effectively, may occasionally ignore the needs and viewpoints of indigenous peoples and local communities, who may have a more comprehensive and place-based understanding of the environment. Simultaneously, favoring the expansion of industrialization and the utilization of capitalism has adversely impacted the natural environment and increased the exploitation of natural resources, noting how "industrial waste and polluted environs serve as invigorating sources of aesthetic production for many modernist works" (Jones, 2016).

Nevertheless, the western perspective has significantly influenced many societal and governmental policies around the globe concerning environmental issues and indigenous culture, land, and sovereignty rights. For instance, Sweden, presumably

known to be ecologically friendly and open to human rights, has unjustly displaced, discriminated against, and damaged the Sámi indigenous identity, terrain, and natural resources through what I argue is the western lens. The Swedish government has continually favored the proliferation of metal mines, as they recently "launched a [mining] policy platform with the specific aim to facilitate the possibilities to reach out to significant mineral resources" (Raitio et al., 2020). Swedish mining companies have expanded in government policy-making and dominated indigenous groups' natural resources, with most of the mines currently placed in the vast lands of the Sámi people. Moreover, due to the Swedish policies intended to help the mining industry's expansion on Sámi land, reindeer herding, which Sámi individuals primarily use for economic profit, is "experiencing rapidly-increasing competing land-uses and acute cumulative impacts... from mining, wind energy, forestry and infrastructure development" (Kløcker Larsen et al., 2017). Since reindeer herding is not a fully protected practice of the Sámi due to the Swedish government not viewing it as an exclusive property right and the legislative support of increasing metal mines, political priorities have not engaged with the issues of indigenous rights. Similarly, although Sweden establishes the Sámi as indigenous, they "currently have weak and uncertain possibilities for influence in the relevant laws and processes" (Raitio et al., 2020).

In essence, the Swedish ignored and dismantled the needs of Sámi rights to land and ownership of reindeer to extend the growing and destructive economic and political goals of the capitalistic and neoliberal government (Henley, 1996). The Swedish government and administration demonstrate an ample job of how the western perspective influences the commodification of nature, where natural resources' commercial or

utilitarian value is prioritized over their inherent value or usefulness as a component of a broader ecosystem. Similarly, mining activities have disrupted the Sámi traditional ways of life and threatened their cultural heritage, further underlining the disastrous impact of the western perspective on the environment and the minority groups who traditionally depend and live on it (Henley, 1996).

Next door to Sweden, in Norway, the Sámi have similarly had their land destroyed, their rights discriminated against, and have been continuously disregarded in policy-making and legislation. The hydroelectric damming of the Alta River is another representation of the Western perspective's impact on indigenous and environmental communities as it was "an extension of Norwegian modernist and development ideologies" that did not examine local knowledge for political goals, as theories for development in Norway during the 1970s and 1980s held that the best means of ensuring economic growth and prosperity were increased technology and an extension of state control and identity (Briggs, 2006).

The construction of the Alta Dam had severe consequences for the Sámi traditional way of life. It not only destroyed their land but also disrupted the reindeer migration patterns that were closely tied to their culture and identity. As Briggs (2006) notes, "as up to tens of thousands of reindeer would be directly or indirectly affected by the dam project, so too [was the] Saami identity" (p. 156). Moreover, the flooding of ancestral property for the dam's construction led to the destruction of significant cultural and historical landmarks and resources for the reindeer, such as lichen, which "once destroyed, lichen cover can take 50 or even 100 years to return" (Henley, 1996). The

damming of the river also resulted in the displacement of many Sámi people from their homes and traditional lands, disrupting their social and economic structures.

The ultimate goal of the Alta Dam was to provide more power to the northern end of Norway. The Norwegian government believed that constructing power plants in the area would be the best way to achieve self-sufficiency and increase energy production cost-efficiently (Briggs, 2006, p. 155). Using the Western perspective analogy, the damming of the Alta River indicates a choice that values human interests ahead of those of non-human species and ecosystems. The Norwegian government decided to construct the dam specifically because it wanted to use the river's energy for human economic progress, even though the project would seriously affect the local Sámi people and the natural environment. The damming of the hydroelectric river also had detrimental impacts on the natural surroundings as it ultimately prioritized economic development over the interest of the environment or indigenous individuals. Furthermore, while it severely destroyed the environmental terrains and homes of many Sámi individuals, it simultaneously revived enough Sámi people to stand up for their heritage and land rights and form parliaments to support and aid in their favor and sovereignty during policy-making.

While establishing the Sámi Parliaments, beginning in 1989 in Norway, have allowed the Sámi to have representation in government hearings, they typically include vague and almost obvious tasks concerning the Sámi people. Likewise, the Sámi Parliaments and the recent development of Truths and Reconciliation groups have provided patronizing approaches to preserve the Sámi culture as "the Saami Parliament may only ask or make proposals or statements" (Szpak & Bunikowski, 2022). In other

words, while the Sámi are allowed to give suggestions or make appraisals, they cannot achieve or legislate any policy-making, as state authorities can only make them.

Therefore, establishing the Sámi Parliaments has been nothing less of a personal gain to make up for the government damage caused to Sámi identity and land and a bitter attempt to bring healing on a societal level and figure out who is responsible for the damages implemented.

Similarly, the apologies the Norwegian king publicly made to repair the damaged and disappeared Sámi identities and customs from acts of Norwegianization in 1850 to 1950s display almost dismissive and aloof acts of accountability as the apologies are committed out of what seems to be self-interest motives of the government.

Contrastingly, the Norwegian government's adoption of the Finnmark Act in 2005 has shifted the arguable anthropocentric views of the western perspective by recognizing the importance of preserving natural ecosystems and the traditional land rights of indigenous peoples. On top of providing management of natural resources, the Finnmark Act also "ensures a legal identification and recognition process, aimed at defining the ownership and use rights to these [Sámi] lands" (Ravna 2014, pg 308). In addition, the Act underlines the need for a more collaborative and participatory approach to decision-making. As well as acknowledges the significance of traditional knowledge and practices held by indigenous peoples in managing natural resources. With this, the Finnmark Act does a superb job of including indigenous participation and inclusion and setting a proper framework to instill the rights of identity and land for the Sámi people. However, it is worth noting that Norway is currently the only country that has implemented this Act, highlighting how continual work still needs to be done throughout

Scandinavia to ensure equal representation and care for indigenous groups and environment preservation.

In North America, the Anishinaabe indigenous group has faced similar obstacles and governmental initiatives that have had detrimental effects on their cultural identity and natural lands, reflecting the destructive policies and initiatives of the West. For example, mercury poisoning and large-scale industrial logging, including clearcutting old age boreal forests on Grassy Narrows' Traditional Land, which the Anishinaabe and Grassy Narrows people heavily depend on, has destructed the well-being and physical health of the natural environment and Native individuals (Willow, 2011). In addition, the dumping of mercury into the rivers, specifically in the English Wabigoon River in 1970 by the Reed Paper Company, resulted in 80% of the Grassy Narrows population to be still experiencing effects of mercury poisoning today "as the 20,000 pounds of mercury traveled down the river, it bioaccumulated in the tissues of fish, animals and Anishinaabe people" (Willow, 2011). Thus highlighting the devastating effects of the West's economic gain motives on the health of indigenous communities and the environment they rely on.

Gratefully, the Anishinaabe and Grassy Narrow people were able to protest and blockade further logging trucks from entering their land in 2002. However, the effects of pollution have continued to remain until the present day, demonstrating the impacts of the western perspective's ceaseless motives of political satisfaction and economic gain, which can have hazardous and deadly effects on the natural environment and the people that depend and live on it. Additionally, the logging of forestry and release of mercury into rivers had devastating impacts on the customs and practices of the Anishinaabe people,

along with access to traditional and sacral foods due to "the Canadian government relocat[ing] the people of Grassy Narrows to a new land base in 1963" (Willow, 2011).

Boarding school policies and reservation removal acts also significantly displaced, segregated, and humiliated the Anishinaabe culture and identity, severely destroying the land and their native foods and practices. The 1867 Indian Act of Canada was the beginning of the venture of the western perspective's effect on indigenous communities as it was based on euro-centric tendencies of "turning Indigenous peoples into wards of the state; [and] replacing traditional governance system with federally imposed reserve systems" (Kolahdooz et al., 2015). The Indian Act also forced the assimilation of indigenous children by placing them into residential boarding schools without familial or personal consent. The primary goal of native boarding schools was to "civilize" the native children by teaching them western values, languages, and customs of environmental extraction by "restrict[ing] children from practicing traditional values, ancestral culture, and language through a means of physical penalties" (Kolahdooz et al., 2015). Subsequently, by erasing indigenous children's traditional practices and languages, the Indian Act eroded Indigenous peoples' connections to their environments and disrupted the transmission of traditional ecological knowledge, notably reflecting the euro and anthropocentric motives of the western perspective, as it frequently regards tradition and culture as impediments to advancement and modernization.

Along with forced assimilation and abusive governmental implantations of negative perspectives of one's indigenous culture and native practices, forced sexual sterilization was also implemented on indigenous individuals deemed unfit to be a parent, which irreparably harmed their sense of autonomy and dignity. Ultimately, the Indian Act



and the boarding school system reinforced the anthropocentric Western perspective of moral environmentalism by displacing Indigenous peoples from their ancestral territories, families, and natural practices and training them to view nature as a resource to be exploited. Similarly, the relocation to governmental reserves by the Indian Act was unsuitable for native agriculture or traditional foods, resulting in present-day health challenges, including Type 2 diabetes and disruption of traditional ecological knowledge and native ways of gathering food.

The displacement of traditional knowledge and indigenous individuals and the forced assimilation of western values also severely diminished the native practices and customs regarding food or natural ingredients. In addition, the enforced government reservations adversely expelled the traditional means of getting or growing Native foods, resulting in a growing reliance on processed and high-calorie foods found at local convenience stores. The forced governmental dependency on their manufactured food has disastrously prevented indigenous individuals from attaining nutritious and healthy foods, resulting in "type 2 diabetes among Native Americans [to be] 248 percent higher than in the general U.S. population" (O'Brien, 2021, p. 98). Likewise, the leading causes of mortality in Native communities are cardiovascular disease and high cholesterol, as the access to traditional and sacred foods has viciously declined since the 1950s and has "been replaced by highly processed foods from federal distribution programs or from growing numbers of fast food restaurants" (O'Brien, 2021, p. 98).

Traditionally, indigenous communities have been exceptionally healthy from eating a richly varied and nutrient-dense diet obtained through using traditional knowledge when gathering or harvesting plants. Nonetheless, the federal

implementations and enforced acculturation, reflected by the western perspective, drastically affected the worldviews, cultural techniques, and means to get resources and food for indigenous people, resulting in devastating and life-altering health effects. The western perspective, which prioritizes the needs and desires of humans over the health and well-being of the environment and its inhabitants, substantially altered the traditional diets and lifestyles of Indigenous peoples and catalyzed extreme poverty and food insecurity from the relocation on reserves, loss of traditional knowledge, and the coerced consumption of cheap and unhealthy foods.

Conversely, the western perspective in North America has attempted to make up for the traumatizing damages inflicted on indigenous communities, such as the espousal of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDRIP) in 2007 by the Canadian government and the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (ADRIP) by the United States in 2016. In Canada, the UNDRIP has provided the framework for establishing amendments and protections for indigenous communities, and the right to self-determination and self-governance, as it states, "Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms" (S.C. 2021, c. 14). The UNDRIP also addresses the historical and persistent effects of forced assimilation and discrimination by highlighting how indigenous people "shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group" (S.C. 2021, c. 14). Additionally, the UNDRIP establishes that indigenous people have the same rights and freedoms as other non-indigenous individuals, and have the rights to be free from any discrimination that involves their cultural identity or heritage.

Fundamentally, through the western perspective, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act has allowed equal conservation of Native rights and the ability to safely practice traditional customs without governmental or non-indigenous interference or prejudice. However, while these attempts of reconciliation and governmental amends with indigenous communities have outlined the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples, it is essential to note that the past actions of residential schools, forced assimilation policies, and destruction of Indigenous land and culture, cannot be undone by the passage of the UNDRIP Act due to the disturbing and destructive historical injustices that have led to generational and genetic-induced trauma.

In addition, the establishment of the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (ADRIP) by the United States in 2016 has addressed similar issues as the UNDRIP, such as allowing the right to self-determination and self-identification, along with dealing with issues the UNDRIP does not address (Newman, 2018). For instance, the ADRIP emphasizes the state's role in fostering economic development and encouraging Indigenous people's involvement in the economic development process, whereas the UNDRIP primarily foregrounds the need to protect Indigenous peoples' traditional lands and cultures. Likewise, indigenous women, which are often underrepresented in governmental declarations, including the UNDRIP, have been specifically included in the ADRIP under their gender equality and protection articles by highlighting how "states recognize that violence against indigenous peoples and individuals, particularly women, hinders or nullifies the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms" (American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2016). The ADRIP recognizes the importance of only including indigenous women in

distinctive articles because of the historically significant discrimination and marginalization they have faced, rather than the "general assumption that indigenous women were encompassed within the category 'indigenous peoples'" (Sinclair-Blakemore, 2019).

Further government initiatives, such as the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) and the Great Lakes Water Quality Accord (GLWQA), have also attempted to relieve the historical cultural and ecological grievances of indigenous communities through implementing initiatives aimed at advancing more equity and justice for Indigenous peoples as well as a better respect for Indigenous cultures and rights. The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) addresses the exclusion of sacred and traditional sites, forced assimilation and exploitation of native land, and interference with indigenous rituals and ceremonies that are now understood as traditional religions of Native people (O'Brien, 2021, p. 36). This Act aims to protect Native Americans' freedom to practice their religion unhindered and freely while acknowledging the value of traditional religious activities to the cultural identity and well-being of Indigenous communities. The suppression of Native religion and spirituality was crucial during the Indian Act and residential boarding schools; therefore, engaging in ceremonials and gaining access to ritual artifacts had severely diminished before the establishment of the AIRFA. Essentially the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, which was driven from the western perspective in an attempt to alleviate the desecrations caused, was created to safeguard and preserve Native American peoples' ancient religious traditions. Along with aims to protect the freedom of indigenous individuals to practice their religion

unhindered and freely through the acknowledgment of Native spiritual values and cultural identity.

In addition to addressing issues of culture and religion, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) has ramifications for environmental preservation. The AIRFA can contribute to preserving significant natural regions and ecosystems that have cultural significance for Indigenous populations by safeguarding sacred and traditional sites, allowing for the freedom to conduct ceremonies there, and granting access to artifacts used in rituals. Traditional ecological knowledge can also inform environmental management methods and aid in natural resource conservation and sustainable management, as it is strongly linked to Indigenous culture and spiritual beliefs. As a result, the AIRFA's protection of Indigenous religious and cultural activities may also benefit the environment and its preservation.

Finally, the Great Lakes Water Quality Accord (GLWQA) recognizes the unique relationship indigenous communities in North America have with the Great Lakes, especially the Anishinaabe people. The GLWQA, a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and Canada, was established in 1972 to address historical cultural and ecological complaints (Krantzberg, 2009). In 2012, the agreement was intended to safeguard and enhance the Great Lakes' water quality while acknowledging and incorporating Indigenous tribes in lake management and decision-making (Chiblow, 2023). Indigenous groups are recognized as significant Great Lakes stakeholders under the GLWQA and participate in various lake management activities, such as assessing the water quality, establishing priorities, and carrying out restoration projects. We can argue that the GLWQA does the most outstanding job out of all the governmental activities previously

described due to the specific regard and representation of the Anishinaabe culture and acknowledgment and use of their traditional ecological knowledge (Chiblow, 2023).

Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that it took nearly forty years to recognize and establish indigenous participation in the GLWQA properly. Once again demonstrating the paternalistic attempts of the western perspective to address the historical injustices faced by indigenous people as an essential step towards promoting more equity and justice.

Overall, the western perspective has profoundly damaged the natural environment and destroyed indigenous culture and identity through the increasing use of neoliberal and modernistic policies and the indulgence of capitalistic tendencies that exploit natural resources for human profit and economic gain. Nonetheless, the West has attempted, and partially succeeded, in implementing governmental initiatives that "make up" for the historical and cultural damages caused, along with attempts to relieve the destruction implemented on indigenous communities and their natural surroundings. Ultimately, adopting a new ecological worldview necessitates a fundamental change in western values and beliefs and an understanding of the interdependence between human welfare and the welfare of the natural world. Along with adequately recognizing indigenous individuals' unique cultural and traditional values that govern how they act and engage with society and the natural environment.

## **Chapter IV: Indigenous Moral Environmentalism**

Using empirical examples of indigenous environmental attitudes and policies, this chapter will explore the components of moral environmentalism through a native lens of ecological preservation, connectivity, spirituality, and interdependence with the land, highlighting the valuable and distinctive viewpoints that indigenous cultures can provide to global environmental conservation efforts. Indigenous moral environmentalism refers to the ethical values and behaviors held toward the natural world by Native individuals, who consider the relationship between all living beings to be interconnected and interdependent with humans, who are viewed as a small component of a more extensive ecosystem (Whyte, 2015). This chapter asserts that indigenous environmentalism is, in fact, more compatible with the notion of moral environmentalism due to the use and value of stewardship, inherent respect for nature, generational and communal-based shared ecological knowledge, and the spiritual interrelationship between all living beings.

Indigenous communities have been traditionally involved and connected with their surrounding natural environment for centuries due to the native modes of thinking and use of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) that has contributed to indigenous individuals' innate awareness of the natural world (Shepard, 2005). The Indigenous perspective of moral environmentalism recognizes the intrinsic value and sanctity of the natural environment and all living beings due to acknowledging that humans are not separate entities from the environment and that ecological resources are not merely a source of human exploitation and consumption (O'Brien, 2021, p. 24). Similarly, this

perspective highlights the sustainable and traditional measures indigenous communities use to aid in ecological preservation, as harmony and reciprocated balance between the natural environment are crucial components of Native values.

The Indigenous perspective of environmentalism encompasses ecocentric motives, emphasizes stewardship with the environment, embodies a spiritual interconnection with land, and carries inclusivity and sovereignty for indigenous representation and rights (O'Brien, 2021, p. 10). Consequently, the Indigenous perspective of moral environmentalism has substantial potential to contribute to global efforts to aid in environmental preservation. However, there are several limitations to implementing indigenous values and techniques into worldwide ecological protection measures as government officials ignore and exclude expert indigenous voices in policy-decision making, disrespect Native land and culture, fail to recognize and fund indigenous initiatives, and have caused the loss of cultural identity from humiliating and segregating individuals, especially with the Sámi and Anishinaabe indigenous communities.

Before addressing the moral environmental perspective of the Sámi and Anishinaabe indigenous groups, stewardship, ethics of care, declarations, and indigenous spiritual connection between land and the non-human world will briefly be examined to relate how these components influence the indigenous perspective of moral environmentalism. Indigenous individuals often think of political autonomy as regarding themselves as stewards or ecological guardians of the natural land. Stewardship "refers to [the] acknowledgment of one's place in a web of interdependent relationships that create moral responsibilities, and it recognizes that there are methods and forms of expertise



involved in carrying out such responsibilities" (Whyte & Cuomo, 2016, p. 238).

Environmental and indigenous stewardship emphasizes the need and duty of humans to preserve a healthy environment for the well-being of all living things. As well as acknowledges the necessity of having a long-term approach to environmental management for the next generations. Additionally, indigenous ethics of care accentuate the significance of understanding one's role in a web of relationships, including humans and non-human organisms and entities; and valorizes specific abilities and qualities, such as respect for the knowledge of grandparents and elders, environmental awareness, and stewardship traditions (Whyte & Cuomo, 2016). With ethics of care, indigenous individuals seek to restore people and communities wounded by injustices by rebuilding relationships that can generate responsibilities pertinent to contemporary environmental challenges like biodiversity conservation and climate change from increasing carbon and greenhouse emissions (Whyte & Cuomo, 2016).

Similarly, Native declarations significantly reinforce indigenous moral values and cultural beliefs, especially in ecological protection. The term "care" is heavily used to describe the responsibility and commitment to cherishing and preserving the natural world. For instance, the *Water Declaration of the Anishinaabek* illustrates how the Anishinaabe culture has "'their inherent responsibilities and intimate relationships to the waters' and 'have the responsibility to care for the land and the waters by our Creator'" (Chiefs of Ontario, 2008). With this, indigenous declarations identify and reaffirm the responsibilities and sacred connection between natural living beings, such as land, wind, water, and human beings. Along with highlighting the spiritual connection indigenous individuals encompass with their natural environment, including how Anishinaabe "have

ceremonies from birth to death that [are] related to the care of waters" (Chiefs of Ontario, 2008).

Arguably, spiritual connection with the land is the most substantial component of the indigenous perspective of moral environmentalism, as every living organism and entity is considered to have a soul or life force that humans should respect and coexist with peacefully. Similarly, by viewing the intrinsic importance and spirituality of all living things and regarding humans as interconnected with the environment, indigenous individuals approach the environment not as a resource to be exploited but as a divine and interrelated system that demands conservation and guardianship (O'Brien, 2021, p. 11). Scientist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer describes the indigenous belief of spirituality that everything in the natural world is alive and has agency. Kimmerer also highlights how nature's offerings, such as the nearby plants and animals, are designed to be cherished and appreciated as living beings rather than being owned or possessed by humans, as she illustrates how "we are showered every day with gifts, but they are not meant for us to keep. Their life is in their movement, the inhale and exhale of our shared breath" (Kimmerer, 2013 pg 104).

The connection between spirituality and moral environmentalism is crucial to understanding the indigenous perspective on environmental conservation. Understanding the environment as a sacred and interrelated system that humans are a part of derives from the conviction that all living things possess a soul or life force. The moral obligation of people to live in harmony and with respect for nature is emphasized by this spiritual link to the land. In contrast to the Western viewpoint, which views nature as a resource to be utilized for economic advantages, indigenous people consider the environment as a

divine, interconnected system that requires protection and care. A more comprehensive and linked understanding of the environment results from the intrinsic value and spirituality of all living things, in which people are seen as an essential component of, rather than as distinct from, the natural world. This viewpoint strongly emphasizes our moral duty to save the environment for future generations. Scientist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer demonstrates this viewpoint by underlining the indigenous conviction that everything in the natural world is alive and has agency. Kimmerer's work emphasizes the necessity of understanding the spirituality of the natural environment and appreciating it as a living ecosystem rather than viewing it as something to be bought or possessed. Humans can learn to coexist with nature and uphold their moral responsibility to be good stewards of the planet by appreciating nature's blessings and honoring their agency.

Drawing on the concept of “shared breath,” indigenous spirituality emphasizes the connectivity of all living things and the notion that people are not separate from nature but rather an essential component. Indigenous individuals also often use the term spirituality to relate to the “moral relationships, especially accountability, that are tied to the pursuit of scientific knowledge” (Whyte, 2018). With this, spirituality is considered an integral part of scientific knowledge due to the interconnection encompassed with the natural world, which then stimulates an obligation between humans and the environment, as the earth is a living being entitled and deserving of as much respect and care as humans. Regarding environmental sustainability, indigenous spirituality also highlights the value of ethical and responsible interaction with the natural world and the necessity of considering how breakthroughs in science and technology will affect the global environment and future generations.

The use of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) also contains a spiritual element as it is viewed as “a gift from the Creator, the ancestors, acquired through dreams, or in direct conversions in the spirit world, the plant people, the animal people, or other spiritual origins” (O-Brien 2021, pg 48). The spiritual component of TEK is frequently seen as an act or practice rather than solely the knowledge of something that is attained via direct interaction with the natural world and other spiritual entities. TEK is crucial in indigenous communities, particularly in ecological preservation, as it is built up through generations of close contact with nature and focuses on the idea that the environment is a spiritual and interrelated system worthy of peaceful interactions between people. Likewise, in the Anishinaabe indigenous group, traditional ecological knowledge pertains to “guide for healthy relationships in a world made up of interconnected other-than-human persons, who have intelligence, knowledge wisdom, and ability to discern right from wrong” (O-Brien 2021, pg 49). TEK acknowledges that non-human beings possess intelligence, knowledge, and wisdom. Along with understanding that the natural environment is a community of living things with their own intrinsic value and significance rather than merely a collection of resources to be abused or consumed.

Now that the principal components of indigenous moral environmentalism have been examined, the remainder of this chapter will explore indigenous northern Europe and North American perspectives through the customs and perceptions of moral environmentalism in the Sámi and Anishinaabe indigenous groups. Along with referencing government legislation and policies that neglect and abide by the cultural

beliefs and traditions of the indigenous Sámi and Anishinaabe's environmental values and practices.

The indigenous perspective of moral environmentalism varies between northern Europe and North America due to the differences in cultures and traditional practices that coincide with the unique natural features in each area. In northern Europe, the Sámi indigenous way of life, financial gains, and cultural identity rely on the land and its natural Arctic resources, especially in reindeer herding. The Sámi has developed and maintained thorough awareness of the Arctic tundra ecosystem, reindeer behavior, and migratory patterns through the transfer of collective knowledge in oral storytelling, Sámi cosmology, and spiritual beliefs of the *noaidi*, and the interconnection of all living beings. The prehistoric cosmology of the Sámi was based on the animistic belief that everything has a soul, including rivers, rocks, or the sun, and “that a form of pantheism [was] infused [in] the natural animate and inanimate world” (Kent 2018, pg 79). While these animistic and pantheistic beliefs were never fully implemented into the Sámi religion due to the assumption that it was related to witchcraft by colonizing missionaries, they significantly contributed to the livelihood and environmental practices of the Sámi by allowing an increased awareness and appreciation of the natural world around them. These Sámi beliefs, of everything containing a life force or spirit, is directly related to moral environmentalism as it aligns with the principle that the natural world has intrinsic value and should be protected regardless of its usefulness to humans due to our interconnection with all living beings.

Moreover, the *noaidi*, or shaman, was a prominent component in Sámi communities and their perspective of moral environmentalism, as the *noaidi* provided

spiritual healing and connection with the natural environment and the outer and material world. The *noaidi* would often enter trances using their drum “while performing his prayers and sacrifices as a means of gaining access to the extraterrestrial spiritual world” (Kent 2018, pg 103). Once the shaman had reached the spiritual world, the *noaidi* could find the souls that had been “lost,” predict the future, provide healing and closure, or help find something, such as a lost belonging or animal to hunt (Kent 2018, pg 103). Through the invocations of the shaman, Sámi individuals could obtain a deeper appreciation and spiritual connection to the natural world due to the conviction that everything in nature possesses vitality and that people can contact these forces through spiritual practices. In parallel, the *noaidi* rituals and beliefs accentuated the indigenous perspective of moral environmentalism by emphasizing the interrelationship of all life forms from interacting with the spirits of various plants, animals, natural elements, or people. Along with influencing a moral environmental responsibility to preserve the natural world through the apprehension that everything has a soul. Similarly, the indigenous perspective of moral environmentalism is noticeably reflected in the practices of the *noaidi*, as they are regarded as a mediator between people and nature who possesses and passes on traditional ecological knowledge that emphasizes maintaining a healthy and respectful relationship with nature (Sexton and Stabbursvik 2010, pg 586).

Nonetheless, with these traditional and spiritual ecological techniques but reliance on the environment for financial and cultural support, the Sámi have suffered vast environmental injustices, fallen victim to forced assimilation and identity loss, and faced mass discrimination and appropriation due to their cultural and spiritual beliefs about the natural environment. Reindeer herding, river water quality, and accessibility to natural

lands have been severely damaged by governmental legislation and policies favoring environmental destruction over indigenous rights and cultural traditions. In Sweden, mining companies, which impact and destroy the herding patterns and migrations for Sámi reindeer, continue to be favored in legislation due to the profitable revenue it administers, noting how “twelve [out] of... fifteen active metal mines (SGU, 2019, 29), and a vast majority of the value of the mineral extraction, are located within Sápmi [Sámi land]” (Lawrence and Åhrén, 2016). Since many Sámi individuals depend on the land for their traditional, social, and economic well-being, the increasing facilitation of metal mines has impacted nearly every aspect of life for the Sámi, including displacing people and natural resources, destructing herding patterns, and threatening political land rights and sovereignty. Likewise, despite reindeer herding being classified as a Sámi right by the Swedish government, it is not considered a property right. Therefore, reindeer herding typically does not get recognition in legislation or policy-making for land use or environmental protection (Raitio et al., 2020).

The impact of mining activities on the Sámi people and their traditional lands has also profoundly affected Indigenous environmentalism. The Sámi's affinity with nature is distinctive and thoroughly ingrained in their culture and spirituality, viewing the land as a living entity and understanding that it is their responsibility to care for it. However, the increasing facilitation of metal mines in Sweden has jeopardized the relationship the Sámi have with their land and undermined the Sámi people's ability to practice their traditional ecological knowledge. The mining activities have also significantly harmed the environment, in addition to causing social and economic inequities. The Sámi people's capacity for managing the natural resources on their ancestral lands sustainably

has been significantly hampered, which has caused habitat loss, water pollution, and the disruption of reindeer herding patterns. The essential tenets of Indigenous environmentalism, which acknowledge the inherent value of the natural world and the significance of its preservation, have been uniformly damaged by the encouragement of mining activities. Mining activities often prioritize profit and economic development over protecting the environment and Indigenous rights, making it more difficult for Native environmentalists like the Sámi to implement their ancient ecological wisdom. Ultimately, the impact of mining on the Sámi people provides a stark illustration of how economic growth threatens Indigenous rights and environmental protection and emphasizes the need for improved acknowledgment of Indigenous rights, traditional lands, and ecosystems, as well as increased participation of Indigenous peoples in decision-making processes.

Although the Sámi indigenous group has been neglected and humiliated by governmental policies and destructive infrastructure developments, the Sámi have remained resilient in fighting and protesting for their environmental and cultural rights due to their interrelationship and connection with the natural land and obligations felt to preserve it. One of the most historical examples of perseverance and grievance includes the protest between 1979-1981 in Norway of the hydroelectric damming of the Alta-Kautokeino river. During these protests, Sámi individuals endured hunger strikes and wrote letters to the king demanding recognition of the flooding that would occur in Sámi villages from the dam (Briggs 2006, pg 154). Protestors also demanded public and political acknowledgment of their Sámi heritage and traditional land rights as the dam



threatened the Sámi people's spiritual and cultural well-being in addition to the physical environment.

Regarding the indigenous perspective of moral environmentalism, the Sámi were battling for more than just their personal rights when they opposed the dam; they also fought to preserve the environment and the natural world. Hence, asserting the claim to be moral environmentalists as the Sámi consider it a moral imperative and personal responsibility to safeguard the environment and incorporate a holistic comprehension of nature and an understanding of how interdependent humans and the environment are.

Additionally, while these protests were unsuccessful in prohibiting the infrastructure of the Alta Dam, they administered global awareness for Sámi rights and institutions and “led to the recognition of Sámi demands for increased influence and establishment of the Sámi Parliament in 1989, followed a few years later by the Sámi Parliament in Sweden (1993) and in Finland (1997) (Josefsen et al., 2016). Nevertheless, as charming and helpful as these Sámi Parliaments seem, they often act as paternalistic approaches that do not provide adequate or detailed initiatives or government policies that grant and respect Sámi rights and cultural needs. Especially when legislation regards rights over land usage, as the area of land in Sápmi set aside for mining in Sweden “has already more than doubled between 2010 and 2017, and the number of mineral exploration permits issued per-year has increased from less than ten, between 2002–2004, to 40–60 permits per-year between 2014–2016 (Österlin & Raitio, 2020).

On the other hand, Scandinavian legislation, especially in Norway, has attempted to apologize and alleviate the past damages implemented on the Sámi culture through public hearings addressing the harmful acts of assimilation, creating Truths and

Reconciliation groups, and establishing a constitutional amendment for the Sámi in 1988 that highlighted the government's responsibility to create conditions to enable the Sámi people to preserve their culture (Ravna 2014, pg 297). The Norwegian Parliament also adopted the 2005 Finnmark Act to assist in "the management of land and natural resources... in a balanced and ecologically sustainable manner for the benefit of the... Sámi culture, reindeer husbandry, use of non-cultivated areas, commercial activity and social life" (Ravna 2014, pg 300). With this Act, Sámi individuals obtained a legal framework for identifying and recognizing these lands' ownership and usage rights, and now "have the right to participate in decision-making processes, and are entitled to participate in the benefit of such activities" (Ravna 2014, pg 303). While Norway is currently the only country abiding by this initiative, the indigenous moral environmental perspective has been significantly strengthened and supported by the Finnmark Act, from granting Sámi individuals authority over their ancestral land and resources and acknowledging the value of preserving their culture and traditional ecological expertise. In addition, by ensuring that their moral principles and cultural values govern the use and management of natural resources in the Sámi region, the act has protected and allowed the Sámi people to enhance their connection to their environment.

Similar to the Sámi, the Anishinaabe indigenous group in North America has a deep reverence and spiritual connection with the natural world, extensive use of traditional ecological knowledge, and appreciation of a sacred quality of life through simple experiences with the environment and individuals around them (O'Brien 2021, pg 3). Albeit having diverse traditions, languages, and world views, the Anishinaabe indigenous groups have similarly faced historical injustices such as forced assimilation,

land confiscation, repression of culture, and discrimination from governmental environmental policies. As well as being precluded from government policy-making decisions and falling victim to western colonization.

The Anishinaabe culture is ingrained in the term *gakina indinawemaaganag*, as it refers to the idea that everything is alive and connected with one another. This Anishinaabe term, which translates to “all my relations,” is “used as prayerful affirmation and entreaty, continual reminders that we exist in a mutually dependent network of relationships and that forgetting that essential truth comes at great cost” (O’Brien 2021, pg 11). Essentially, *gakina indinawemaaganag* describes a way of life for the Anishinaabe culture. It represents a web of interconnected relationships in which all beings possess the same spirit, and no species asserts ontological primacy. One can presume this Anishinaabe term is closely related to the practice and perspective of indigenous moral environmentalism as it is the notion of reciprocity and equilibrium between humans and the natural world and emphasizes the significance of communal and collective well-being and health of the natural environment. Likewise, this Anishinaabe term acknowledges the interdependence of all life and the significance of caring for the natural world to benefit the entire community, which extensively aids in environmental sustainability and the preservation of the natural world.

The Anishinaabe language also comprises components of indigenous moral environmentalism as it “codes the earth and features of the landscape such as mountains, rivers, lakes and stones as animate” (O’Brien 2021, pg 24). With this, the Anishinaabe language reflects the interconnected relationship between people and the environment and contains a sense of reciprocity and respect for the natural world. Additionally, many

oral storytelling and teachings from the Anishinaabe culture emphasize the value of maintaining a healthy relationship with nature and the environment. Animals, for instance, sometimes serve as instructors in tales, giving knowledge about nature and the Anishinaabe way of life. Other stories include how the earth and its features were formed, such as the tale of “*Gichi Manidoo*, the Great Spirit, [who] took four parts of Mother Earth... and blew into them using a sacred shell.. [and] “from the union of his breath with the elements, [a] man was created” and then lowered to earth” (Noodin 2014, pg 27). The Anishinaabe migration tale also tells of finding “the place the food grows on water” and the great gift of manoomin, or wild rice for the people” (Jensen, 2020). This story helps describe the Anishinaabe people’s interdependent relationship with the land, as they care for the wild rice’s habitat just as it does for the Anishinaabe. Their relationship with manoomin, which they regard as a human relative, also supports traditional values of natural cycles, generational sharing, and cultural resilience from harvest to eating (Jensen, 2020).

Subsequently, these tales serve to emphasize the value of harmony, reciprocity, and respect in interactions between people and the natural world, as well as the spiritual significance that went into creating the natural world. Furthermore, active listening is taught alongside Anishinaabe storytelling as a way of life that involves observing the living world in a humbled and mannered process to relate and comprehend the stories being told and ultimately “hear...[what] the natural world has to tell” (O’Brien 2021 pg 6).

Comparably, governmental legislation and administration have been prominent in destroying Anishinaabe land, resources, and culture. However, parallel to the Sámi, the

Anishinaabe have protested and fought for environmental and indigenous justice. During the 1990s, pollution, mercury poisoning, and flooding detrimentally affected the Anishinaabe nation from industrial infrastructure, including logging trucks. The rising evolution of infrastructure, such as the development of pulp mills and the use of logging mills, caused hazardous damage and mortality to the Anishinaabe children and infants living in the area, along with the men working in the fishing economy, as their rivers were contaminated from the pollution. In 2002, Anishinaabe activists and members blocked logging trucks and other machinery from entering their ancestral grounds. This barrier, the Grassy Narrows blockade, became a location of a cultural resurgence as it included a continuously blazing sacred fire and a community resiliently fighting for its protection (O'Brien 2021 pg 47). During this blockade, activists for environmental protection in Anishinaabe communities argued that "preserving the land and preserving the people were inseparable concerns: their land-based culture required healthy ecosystems to survive" (O'Brien 2021 pg 47).

Moreover, Author Anne Willow describes the Grassy Narrows blockade and highlights how the Anishinaabe "history... is heartrending... a source of rage" (2021, 69). As previously discussed in Chapter Two, rage can be an integral element of moral environmentalism as it stimulates a stronger obligation to aid in environmental protection. In connection to the blockade, fury at the effects ecological damage had on their children, animals, and plants, and resentment to those that attributed, is what provoked the Anishinaabe members to protest and battle for protection and representation of their land, presumably. Fortunately, after five years of fighting the logging company, it resiliently ended in victory for the Anishinaabe people.

Furthermore, the 1867 Indian Act in Canada, which “facilitated and enforced the assimilation of indigenous peoples into European culture,” adversely affected the indigenous moral environmentalism perspective by making indigenous individuals wards of the state, substituting federally imposed reserve systems for traditional forms of government, and compelling them to give up their identity and cultural heritage (Kolahdooz et al., 2015). The forced assimilation of indigenous individuals also negatively and fatally affected the spirituality, traditions, cultures, languages, and connections to the land of Indigenous peoples—all essential to their health and well-being. Additionally, enforcing boarding schools on Native children severely violated their dignity and autonomy, which resulted in unbearable trauma, mental illness, depression, violence, sexual, alcohol, and drug-related vulnerabilities and addictions (Strickland, 2006).

The residential boarding school policy, in place until 1996, also resulted in transgenerational trauma, which describes how “suicidal behaviors had originated from the mass trauma experienced by residential boarding school survivors, who in turn transmitted these experiences and histories, directly or indirectly, to their offspring” (Elias et al., 2012). Inherently, the forced assimilation and boarding school policies under the Indian Act of 1867 negatively conflicted with the elements of moral environmentalism by interfering with the mental and physical health of future offspring, along with causing the elimination of long-standing ecological knowledge and management techniques. Indigenous peoples’ ability to govern themselves under their laws and customs was also exploited by replacing traditional forms of governance with reserve systems imposed by the federal state. Likewise, the disruption of conventional

land management procedures and conservation efforts severely harmed the environment, and significant traditional ecological knowledge was lost as indigenous peoples were forced and assimilated to give up their identity and cultural heritage.

An ongoing example of environmental discrimination and injustice that has adversely affected the health of many Anishinaabe individuals, particularly in the cause of type 2 diabetes, is the diminishing access to sacred and native foods and resources for traditional farming and gathering. Since the 1950s, the Anishinaabe culture has been subjected to boarding schools, forced into reservations, and given inadequate admission to natural resources for food consumption and growth (O'Brien, 2021, p. 99). Due to being forced to relocate to areas that did not have adequate climate or irrigation for their native plants and animals, worldviews, cultural techniques, and means to get resources for food for many Anishinaabe individuals have been depleted or forgotten about as they can not grow or obtain native ingredients for their traditional meals. Likewise, indigenous individuals have seen substantial lifestyle changes, including a departure from their native diets and increased reliance on manufactured and high-calorie foods, resulting in "type 2 diabetes among Native Americans [being] 248 percent higher than the general U.S. population (O'Brien, 2021, p. 98). Particularly in the case of type 2 diabetes, the decreasing availability of sacred and native foods and resources for traditional farming and gathering by Indigenous peoples is a glaring illustration of how environmental and cultural deterioration interact.

Additionally, the mining industry in Sweden and the implementation of the Alta Dam in Norway display the impacts of environmental damage and discrimination as they have negatively impacted the traditional lands and resources of the Sámi people, harming

their culture, way of life, and general well-being. These instances demonstrate how exploiting natural resources and contempt for Indigenous peoples' rights to their lands and resources may significantly and adversely affect the environment and society, frequently disproportionately affecting Indigenous peoples. It also highlights the need for a more just and equitable approach to environmental management that values and respects Indigenous peoples' rights and cultural knowledge and encourages environmentally sound behavior to preserve the environment for present and future generations.

Regarding moral environmentalism, the lack of access to sacred and native foods has severely impacted the health equity and traditional ecological values of Anishinaabe individuals, as well as violating the key component of recognizing the connections between the environment, culture, and human health. Similarly, many indigenous residential neighborhoods have “greater exposure to fast food outlets and convenience stores and fewer resources for reaching supermarkets or major food retailers” (Kolahdooz et al., 2015). Therefore, access to traditional foods, which are frequently healthier and more nutrient-dense than contemporary processed foods, has consequently decreased, as the forceful eviction of Indigenous people from their ancestral lands and the adoption of Euro-Canadian agricultural methods has disrupted traditional food systems and significantly harmed the native environment.

While there are laws to safeguard Anishinaabe rights and property, much still needs to be done to address the systemic discrimination and lingering effects of colonialism that Indigenous people in Canada and the United States continue to experience. Nonetheless, in 2007 Canada implemented, and has since been assented to in



2021, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which acknowledges and upholds Indigenous peoples' rights to their lands, territories, and resources and mandates that the government must collaborate and consult with indigenous peoples on issues that concern them (S.C. 2021, c. 14). The United States also implemented the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (ADRIP) years later in 2016, which is similar to the UNDRIP, yet "arguably provides a more comprehensive and progressive recognition of the rights of indigenous women than UNDRIP" (Sinclair-Blakemore, 2019). The ADRIP portrays indigenous women as right-holders and views violence against them as a threat to their ability to realize their collective and individual rights. In contrast, UNDRIP views violence against indigenous women as existing outside of communal and individual rights and "positions indigenous women as victims rather than as empowered actors" (Sinclair-Blakemore, 2019). Similarly, the UNDRIP does not clearly recognize the positive rights of indigenous women or their compatibility with collective rights as the ADRIP does. Therefore, while these Declarations affirm that indigenous peoples have the right to choose their own political position and the right to maintain, protect, and develop their cultures, traditions, and languages, they lack in containing the same recognition and respect for indigenous women's rights and representation.

The UNDRIP has significantly impacted the rights and well-being of Indigenous groups, who have utilized its provisions to advance their causes. The Sámi, for instance, have fought for their right to self-determination, which includes control over their Arctic lands and resources. They have also pushed for the recognition of their traditional methods of land use, particularly reindeer herding, and for the right to be consulted and

approve of projects that may affect their lands. The UNDRIP has also supported Sámi's linguistic and cultural rights, particularly in the area of education in their native language.

The UNDRIP has been a powerful tool for indigenous groups to assert their entitlements and work towards a more just and equitable future. Similarly, the UNDRIP has been instrumental in defending the cultural and environmental privileges of the Anishinaabe. The Anishinaabe have long struggled for governmental recognition of their sacred sites and cultural traditions and for preserving their ancestral areas and resources, such as wild rice fields and the Great Lakes. Additionally, the UNDRIP has supported the Anishinaabe's freedom to self-determination and to free, prior, and informed consent concerning development initiatives that might impact their lands and resources.

Nonetheless, it is essential to note that the implementation of UNDRIP and ADRIP has aligned with the values of indigenous moral environmentalism by recognizing the critical role of indigenous peoples in environmental conservation and sustainable development. For instance, Article 29 of the UNDRIP (2007), "Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources" (S.C. 2021, c. 14). Moreover, these declarations affirm the rights of indigenous beliefs, such as the interconnection of all beings and the responsibility to respect and protect the environment for future generations.

Another policy that coincides with moral environmentalism and Anishinaabe rights is the establishment of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) in 1978, previously discussed in Chapter 3. This Act represented the ongoing conflict between ancient spiritual principles and contemporary environmental problems and

accepted indigenous people's spiritual beliefs and practices as closely intertwined with their relationship with the natural world. Uniformly, this Act accommodated the components of indigenous moral environmentalism as it acknowledges the spiritual and cultural dimensions of Native American tribes' interaction with the environment, and promotes a legal framework for safeguarding the environment while respecting the traditional and spiritual practices of indigenous peoples. However, although AIRFA "declared the Native people had the right to hold ceremonies and access to sacred places, it did not actually protect those resources and places" (O'Brien, 2021, p. 36). Therefore, while the AIRFA has allowed indigenous individuals the right and safety to perform ritual practices tied to their religion, there is no guaranteed governmental protection when it comes to accessing or performing at these ceremonial sites.

Lastly, a bilateral agreement between Canada and the United States to safeguard, "restore, and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the waters of the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem," was implemented by President Richard Nixon and Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau on April 15, 1972, known as the Great Lakes Water Quality Accord (GLWQA) (Krantzberg, 2009). In 2012, the GLWQA also "recognized the involvement and participation of Indigenous Peoples is essential to achieve the objectives of the Agreement" (Chiblow, 2023). Correspondingly, the GLWQA in 2012 claimed that traditional ecological knowledge should be the foundation for water decision-making as it assists in understanding and managing the Great Lakes. The Anishinaabe are also distinguished in the Act as they possess essential expertise in using traditional knowledge ecological to support the Great Lakes water governance systems, noting how "Anishinaabek women could provide a framework on exactly how

to assist with restoration, protection, and conservation of the Great Lakes based on their knowledge and unique relationship with the waters” (Chiblow, 2023).

Substantially, the GLWQA relates to moral environmentalism as it recognizes the importance of incorporating traditional ecological knowledge and indigenous collaboration into decision-making processes regarding environmental preservation and restoration. Like moral environmentalism, the Act emphasizes the Great Lakes’ importance to Indigenous Peoples on a cultural, economic, and social level. It also calls for cooperation in its implementation between Indigenous Peoples and the governments of Canada and the United States, along with highlighting how indigenous peoples, such as the Anishinaabe, have a distinctive viewpoint on the natural world and can offer essential insights into the environmental issues the Great Lakes are currently encountering.

Based on what has been discussed in this chapter and the evidence stated from the adverse effects of disconnection from the land, food insecurity, and forced assimilation, we can see that the indigenous viewpoint is more compatible with moral environmentalism as it ultimately argues that a harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world is crucial for both their survival and well-being and the implementation of these unjust and destructive practices is ethically and culturally wrong. Overall, the evidence presented in this chapter on the customs, cultural views, and continual persistence in environmental preservation by the Sámi and Anishinaabe suggests that Indigenous moral environmentalism offers a valuable perspective on environmental issues and should be considered in future ecological decision-making for the benefit and livelihood of humans and the natural world. By incorporating traditional

ecological knowledge and valuing Native spiritual and cultural practices, the indigenous moral environmental perspective reflects an increasing awareness of the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of protecting the environment for future generations.

## **Chapter V: Conclusion**

This thesis set out to explore the moral environmental differences between northern Europe and North America through a Western and indigenous perspective to understand the cultural, social, and moral values that shape human-environment interactions and highlight the importance of considering diverse perspectives in efforts to address global environmental challenges. This concluding chapter will summarize the thesis's key findings and make recommendations for future research and action, especially in calling for more exemplary indigenous representation and knowledge for future sustainable and environmental efforts. It will also summarize the implications that can be gained from this study, such as challenging the prevalent belief that humans are superior to and separate from nature and focusing instead on the interconnectedness of all living entities and the significance of maintaining ecological equilibrium. Ultimately, the use and implications of moral environmentalism, especially from the Indigenous perspective, can substantially guide the creation of environmental regulations as it places the health of the entire ecosystem above the interests of individuals.

This thesis has described the elements of moral environmentalism, which will be briefly summarized as relating to how individuals treat and value their natural ecological surroundings and how their values affect the efforts to conserve the environment and engage in pro-environmental conduct. Moral environmentalism also highlights how individual norms, social attitudes, emotions, behaviors, internal motivations, environmental views, and cultural background affect how people morally perceive the

environment. Likewise, through the examination of moral environmentalism, this study illuminated how individuals are more compelled and prone to engage in pro-environmental behaviors when their values are foregrounded in empathic and altruistic motives and when individuals contain a deep connection to nature through the adoption and usage of the ecocentric perspective. Therefore, when describing the Western and indigenous perspectives, it notes that the indigenous viewpoint is more encompassing of these ecocentric and spiritually connected attitudes toward the environment than the lateral due to their generational engagement with nature, harmonious balance with their environmental surroundings and use of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK).

By contrast, the Western chapter has defined the notions of moral environmentalism as relating to the anthropocentric motives that categorize nature as a resource that people may use to fulfill their personal desires or economic needs, leading to human-centric rationales as the primary reason for aiding in environmental conservation. This study has contended that the Western perspective of moral environmentalism has significantly contributed to the often irreparable ecological degradation and social injustice, particularly for Native communities, along with using paternalistic approaches in attempts to alleviate these Indigenous and environmental injustices with aims to promote ecological sustainability. The West has frequently failed to acknowledge indigenous populations' exceptional and traditional knowledge and customs, perpetuating colonial mindsets and power disparities. Additionally, the Western perspective has often indulged capitalistic and neoliberal tendencies that hinder ecological preservation efforts as profit and economic expansion are given precedence above social justice and environmental sustainability.

This thesis argues that in order to make environmental decisions effectively, we must prioritize indigenous viewpoints, which include incorporating ecocentric values and traditional ecological knowledge into government decisions and policy-making. Present-day policy-making requires a fundamental shift towards more cooperative and inclusive methods that honor indigenous sovereignty and self-determination that seeks to rectify historical and present-day environmental injustices. By centering indigenous perspectives and knowledge in environmental decision-making processes, we can develop a more equitable, long-lasting, and inclusive relationship with nature and work towards a more sustainable environment. This approach also acknowledges the intrinsic value and interconnection of all living things and recognizes the urgency for a holistic and harmonious approach to ecological conservation that prioritizes the well-being of both human and non-human communities. By working together with indigenous communities, we can move towards a more just and sustainable future that values the wisdom of traditional ecological knowledge and recognizes the vital role of indigenous peoples in environmental conservation efforts.

Furthermore, the Sámi and Anishinaabe Indigenous groups have been severely impacted by the environmental deterioration and colonialism efforts of the Western perspective that put commercial interests and colonial policies ahead of indigenous and environmental concerns, which irreversibly jeopardized their way of life, degenerated their cultural identity, and threatened their use of traditional ecological knowledge. The Sámi have a strong affinity for the land and have created a system of reindeer herding that is environmentally conscious and sustainable, along with incorporating spiritual uses of shamanism that have been passed down through generations and faced mass and



forced assimilation. Likewise, the Anishinaabe have a powerful bond with their land and waters, an intense spiritual bond with the environment, and a profound use of traditional ecological knowledge that emphasizes the interdependence and interrelationship of all living things in their ecosystem. Both of these indigenous groups have also remained resilient in their battle against colonialism and the economic motives of capitalistic governments, as well as creating unique and efficient methods for protecting their natural resources and managing their ecosystems that can be essentially used as models for sustainable practices. Fundamentally, the preservation and empowerment of indigenous people and cultures can be facilitated by incorporating indigenous viewpoints and expertise into environmental management and policy-making processes, as this can lead to a more morally equitable and sustainable relationship with the natural world.

Effective environmental preservation depends on understanding how civilization and nature interact and how moral principles affect ecological laws and regulations. This thesis demonstrates how the differences in values and beliefs between Westernized and indigenous societies can substantially impact how the environment is treated and interpreted. This study underlines the significance of considering indigenous viewpoints for ecological preservation by underlining the necessity for a change towards an indigenous perspective, which values a more spiritual and intellectual interaction with nature through traditional environmental knowledge. Additionally, the research sheds light on regional land preservation efforts and discriminatory laws that segregate indigenous individuals.

Ultimately, we will never fully have a moral environment due to the complexity of ecological processes and the limitations of human knowledge and comprehension, and

differences in moral values. Nevertheless, we may work to have a more fair and sustainable connection with the environment by combining other viewpoints and beliefs, notably those of indigenous groups who have been stewards of the land for generations. To do this, though, calls for a fundamental change in how we think about environmental protection—one that values every living being's intrinsic worth and prioritizes the welfare of both human and non-human populations. It necessitates that we acknowledge the past and present iniquities done to indigenous peoples and try to make amends through ways that respect their sovereignty and right to self-determination. Only then can we start taking steps towards a more comprehensive and harmonious ecological preservation strategy by acknowledging the interdependence and connectivity of all living things and addressing the urgent need for collective action to manage the contemporary environmental challenges and indigenous justice.

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