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## Combating the Climate Crisis: Anishinaabe Philosophy and Environmental Justice

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# Combating the Climate Crisis: Anishinaabe Philosophy and Environmental Justice

Margaret Hunt

**Abstract**

The climate crisis is considered one of humans' most detrimental issues today. Although there is a struggle to find solutions, many have been and continue to be at the forefront of the environmental movement, specifically Indigenous communities. The Anishinaabe people, in particular, have philosophies centered around environmental care. They view the environment as something deserving of honor and respect. Although these ideas have allowed them to have a respectful relationship with their local ecosystems, the United States government has ignored these ideas from the early stages of the environmental movement. With this, there is also an extensive history of harmful government actions toward Indigenous people in which they are put at risk by the climate crisis. By considering their ways of living which have proven to work for ages, and the philosophies these ideas stem from, we can amplify the voices of Indigenous people and help combat the climate crisis. In Chapter 1, I will explain climate change and its effects, including the current issues we see in government and an introduction to Anishinaabe hardships in relation to the climate crisis. Chapter 2 will focus on the environmental and cultural history of the Anishinaabe people and their background in sustainable practices. Chapter 3 will focus on Anishinaabe storytelling and how these ideas are put into practice. Chapter 4 will go in depth on environmental injustices faced by Indigenous people and those more specifically affecting the Anishinaabe, as well as their place in the environmental movement historically. Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss possible solutions in detail to increase protections for Indigenous communities and make conscious efforts to decrease the effects of climate change while keeping the Anishinaabe and their ideas in mind.

Key Words: Indigenous, environmental injustice, philosophies, climate crisis

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**Introduction:**

When I first began learning about the climate crisis, there was a specific emphasis on the need for recycling in order to keep the ocean clean. Growing up by the ocean, seeing the pictures of birds tangled in soda can packaging or fishing lines, as well as the variety of marine mammals cut open to reveal a stomach filled with plastic was nothing new to me. Other than that, there was not much emphasis on the other issues surrounding the environment and climate change. Getting to college and learning about environmental justice issues was a rude awakening for me. I had grown up in an area in which many issues like this were ignored. During my second year of college, I learned of the environmental justice aspect of the climate crisis as well as how people of color were historically behind the beginning of the environmental movement. Before this, it was a problem of losing biodiversity and poisoning our local ecosystems. Although the environmental movement is still both of those things, it is so much more than that. As I learned even more about these environmental injustices, I began to recognize my naivety as well as the privilege I hold to not only be less affected by the climate crisis but not know of the injustices occurring. Along with that, it deeply encouraged my climate fear. Roughly a year later, I began taking a course titled 'Native American Philosophy,' which wholly altered my views on the climate crisis and the climate doom I had been experiencing.

For the first time since learning about the climate crisis, I found myself feeling more optimistic about finding solutions and actually accomplishing them. My Native American Philosophy course brought my attention to an Indigenous group known as the Anishinaabe people and their philosophies about learning to respect the environment and view it as an equal. Although I would not say my climate fear has left me entirely, it has subsided enough for me to feel mostly positive when speaking about the climate crisis. Learning of these ideas gave me

hope knowing that there are people who live in a sustainable way and not only do not actively harm their surrounding ecosystems but actually help them.

The Anishinaabe people and other Indigenous communities have been drastically more impacted by climate change than a lot of the United States population. They have been taken advantage of by the government for years and continue to be viewed as less than when making decisions that are harmful to the environment. The Anishinaabe people and their philosophies hold the proper way to view the environment, prioritizing care and respect. Their way of thinking shows a healthy relationship between humans and nature.

In my thesis, I will explain the historical background of the Anishinaabe and the environment including their struggles with environmental justice. In Chapter 1, I explain the current state of the United States in regards to climate change, give background on government involvement in solutions, and briefly explain how the Anishinaabe are related to all of this. In Chapter 2, I go through the cultural history of the Anishinaabe, focusing on their relationship with the environment and how that came to be. Chapter 3 focuses on storytelling within the tribes, and how the philosophies that result are the most sustainable way to view the environment. Chapter 4 goes into environmental injustices faced by the Anishinaabe as well as some background to Indigenous environmental justice as a whole. Finally, I end my thesis with solutions on the incorporation of these philosophies, how to involve Indigenous people in the environmental movement, and working on environmental injustices.

### **Chapter 1: The Climate Crisis and the Anishinaabe**

*Climate Change and Its Effects*. 2021 has been recorded as the sixth warmest year on record (Lindsey 2022). Despite being several months into 2023, we have shown little improvement as the state of the Earth worsens. There has been an upward trend in warming over

the last few years, making 2013 through 2021 among the warmest years on record. It is fair to assume that our emissions are continuing to increase or at least stay the same, and in that case, models project that global temperatures may be at least 5 degrees warmer and as much as 10.2 degrees warmer than the average temperature between 1901 to 1960 (Lindsey 2002). There are things that could be done to slow this process, but the government has done the bare minimum to help minimize the effects of climate change.

The United States average temperature has increased by 1.3 °F to 1.9 °F since the beginning of record keeping in 1895. The majority of this increase has occurred since the 1970s when the most recent decade was the warmest on record. Due to human activity and effect on the climate, these temperature rises are not uniform or consistent (Walsh et al. 2014, 28). Since 1991, temperatures have averaged 1°F to 1.5 °F higher than the average in 1901-1960 over the majority of the United States. Predictions also indicate that warming will increase by 2 °F to 4 °F in most areas in the next few decades (Walsh et al. 2014, 29).

A large fraction of species face increased chances of extinction due to climate change. Due to plant species being unable to shift their geographical ranges quickly enough to avoid climate change rates in most areas, they are at a high risk of extinction. Similarly, many small animals and freshwater mollusks will not be able to keep up with the changes (IPCC 2014, 17). These changes will also result in food insecurity. For wheat and rice mainly in tropical and temperate regions, climate change is currently projected to negatively impact with temperature increases of 2 °C or more above late 20th century levels. As global temperatures increase 4 °C or more above late 20th century levels, combined with the risk of higher food demand, food insecurity globally may rise (IPCC 2014, 17).

A large portion of animals have lost a third or more of their global habitat within the last 20 years or so. This includes mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles that scientists are capable of properly tracking. Biodiversity is currently declining at rates we have never seen before, according to climate scientists and wildlife biologists. Some groups project that almost a million species are threatened with extinction, possibly within the next few decades. United Nations secretary general António Guterres said, “With our bottomless appetite for unchecked and unequal economic growth, humanity has become a weapon of mass extinction” (Popovich et. al 2021).

The loss of one species within an ecosystem can cause the entire thing to collapse. The collapse of an ecosystem can also result in issues with food and water supplies for humans. There are many reasons why this loss is occurring, but it all stems from humans. As the population has doubled since 1970, we have begun to run out of space. This increase in population has resulted in a mass increase in consumption, the root of the majority of our problems surrounding the climate crisis. As the climate crisis worsens, humans put wildlife at an even greater risk as we destroy their habitats and populations (Popovich et. al 2021).

In relation to the climate crisis and the environment, there are things that have a major emphasis put on them and others that do not receive that same attention, even from major news sources. Something equally important to what is typically advertised but incredibly overlooked is the endangerment and extinction of plants due to the climate crisis. Although the majority of plant species are typically not cared about by a fair portion of the population, they are absolutely vital to our everyday lives. Despite how clear it may seem, it does not appear that many people consider the need for them.



*Issues in Government.* Environmentalism has been a huge topic within politics over the last few years, leading to vast changes within the last two elections. Under the Trump Administration, major changes were made that actively harmed the environment and entirely ignored the warnings of climate scientists. During his four years holding office, we saw roughly 100 major environmental laws or rules reversed, with more than a dozen in progress to be changed at the end of his term. “The bulk of the rollbacks identified by the Times were carried out by the Environmental Protection Agency, which weakened Obama-era limits on planet-warming carbon dioxide emissions from power plants and from cars and trucks; removed protections from more than half the nation’s wetlands; and withdrew the legal justification for restricting mercury emissions from power plants” (Popovich et al. 2021). Through these removals, especially those involving wildlife protections, the opportunity for drilling and leasing was made possible on what was once protected lands. Trump’s actions as President were said to significantly increase greenhouse gas emissions from the already concerning level they were at before he had held office. Despite the clear harm that these rollbacks could have caused, the Trump Administration continued on with each of them. They were done supposedly to create more jobs, according to Trump and his large political following. With Trump came an increase in climate denial as well as he openly stated throughout his four years in office that he did not believe in the severity of the climate crisis. Those four years were a clear indicator that the government was willing to put people at risk in order to better the economy, unsurprisingly, as this is something we have seen throughout history in the United States. Profit is their main concern rather than the safety and well-being of the people they are supposed to protect and serve as government officials, especially when it comes to Indigenous people. The extreme rollbacks done under Trump will have long-lasting and harsh effects on the state of the climate.

The environment has come to be a party issue, in which the Republican party holds little care concerning the climate crisis. Unfortunately, the Democratic and Republican parties are similar as they are both willing to put the environment at risk, but Republicans are willing to admit their lack of care for it.

The Biden Administration is particularly interesting to observe in relation to environmental policy. Within these last few years, they have made quite a bit of progress but also have supported many policies that will cause a lot of harm to the environment. Although there are many flaws to the climate-related policy under the Biden Administration, there have also been some major changes that are beneficial. In April 2021, President Biden set a national goal to reduce emissions by 40% by 2030 under the Inflation Reduction Act. This will help incentivize clean energy, electric homes, and electric cars. It also allows the government to invest in green technology with an increase in demand for electric cars and homes. Although this change may seem quite simple, it is important to acknowledge how polluted our air is due to fossil fuels. This change is a great step forward as fewer people are likely to be exposed to the extraction and burning of fossil fuels (Citizens' Climate Lobby 2023). Another way in which the Biden Administration has made progress is through a change in regulations on super pollutants, or rather the emissions of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) and methane, which trap much more heat than carbon dioxide. The EPA had issued regulations to phase HFCs down, and in 2022, the Biden Administration updated the Methans Action Plan, which is 50 measures and \$20 billion in funding. This paired with the Inflation Reduction Act, which will begin a methane emissions fee for certain oil and gas facilities starting in 2024, are a great start to cleaning up air pollution (Citizens' Climate Lobby 2023).

Those changes described above are the most significant progress we have seen over the last few years, but there is still more that has been created to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis. However, an original plan by the Biden Administration was for 50% of new passenger vehicles sold by 2030 to have zero emissions. The EPA has moved to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions from model years 2023-2026 and begin working on standards for cars created after 2027. California, on its own, has finalized its plan to require zero emissions from all cars after 2035, a plan that is believed to bring more states to follow through with as well. There has also been an improvement in their methods to remove pollution from the air. Even with this devotion to reducing carbon emissions, we have to work on removing what has already been emitted. Another way in which progress has been made is the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law which includes investments in wildfire risk mitigation and ecosystem restoration. These changes would allow for more natural carbon removal as it would encourage the growth of more trees. The Inflation Reduction Act is also incredibly useful in relation to this, as it allocates \$19 billion to support climate-smart agriculture. It also invests roughly \$3 billion in carbon sequestration within urban forests and national public lands. There have also been some improvements made in clean electricity standards. Biden signed an executive order to require federal agencies to have 100% carbon pollution-free electricity by 2030 (Citizens' Climate Lobby 2023). Progress in this field will also come from tax credits in the Inflation Reduction Act. Although Biden's goal of 100% clean electricity by 2035 does not seem likely, these changes are great progress towards that goal eventually.

Changing standards for replacing fossil fuels with electricity in relation to appliances and equipment is one of many ideas that have struggled underneath the Biden Administration. Over the last few years, we have seen many urban areas ban the use of natural gas in new buildings.

Although we do not see many plans for a federal ban on fossil fuel use in appliances, we do see some progress again from the Inflation Reduction Act, as it includes a \$2,000 tax credit for new heat pumps, a \$9 billion check to support state energy efficiency, and a 30% tax credit for residential solar systems and batteries. Along with changing the standards for appliances and equipment, they have also made some progress on changing performance standards for cement, steel, and plastic from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This law includes major investments in carbon capturing and sequestering, both absolutely vital to clean up air pollution. With the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, an executive order has come to direct federal agencies to purchase low-carbon building materials. This order would allow the United States to achieve net-zero federal procurement by roughly 2045, hopefully. In the last year, the Biden Administration has also announced an initiative requiring major suppliers to the federal government to set emission-reduction targets based on scientific research. This, paired with the First Movers Coalition's project enlisting major companies in decarbonizing cement, steel, and chemicals, will hopefully also help with this. Even with this progress, the government is not doing enough. The environmental issues the government works on are so important because they are a violation of human rights (Citizens' Climate Lobby 2023).

Even with so many positive changes that have come from the Biden Administration, there have been setbacks. The most important decision he has made regards the Willow Project, one in which he made an incredibly harmful choice allowing for more drilling within the Arctic Refuge. According to Pew Research, "58% say the federal government is doing too little to reduce the effects of global climate change, compared with just 18% who say it is doing too much (22% say it is doing about the right amount). Here again, partisan differences are wide, with Democrats much more likely than Republicans to say the federal government is doing too little to reduce the

effects of climate change (82% vs. 28%)” (Kennedy et al. 2022). It is clear that there has been progress under the Biden Administration, as having Trump out of office was progress itself, but there is so much more to be done, and it must be done quickly. Without change soon, more people are to be put at risk of being harmed by the climate crisis, whether it be from air pollution, water pollution, famine, natural disasters, etc. In some way or another, a large portion of the population is already actively feeling the effects of climate change, and it is only going to increase if we do not see major changes soon.

*Climate and Ecosystem Services.* Proposals of individual-level change are the current trend. One of the most obvious and widespread would be planting native plants in your area as well, conserving water to ensure less harm during droughts, and lowering your individual carbon footprint. It is essential to understand the actual good that comes from personal environmentalism. That is not to say that personal efforts mean nothing, but rather that this is a huge issue. We must acknowledge the difference between this and the impact the government can have by making positive changes (Bienkowski 2012). Even as the environmental movement gains more of a following and people adjust the way that they live, it will not allow for the same change that government action can. Regardless of our actions as individuals, it does not combat the current issues surrounding large corporations and their government aid.

Even in a world where the climate crisis is a widely talked about topic on the news and in politics, there is a huge portion of the United States population that does not believe in the environmental issues or chooses not to care about them. A huge part of the American mentality is that nature is something for our taking. Because something is there, we think that we are entitled to it. This mentality that we as humans are owed everything because we dominate the food chain and we view ourselves as the most intelligent species is one of the reasons why we

are in the scenario we are currently in. When we view ourselves as the most important species, we put everything else at risk. Although we may be more intelligent than many species, we all rely on each other. Without these other species that view us as less than us, we would not be able to survive. Each ecosystem is fragile, allowing even the slightest change to possibly set off a horrible chain of effects, possibly resulting in endangerment or extinction. This shows us the need for a mass change in our current climate planning, giving people hope for national plans and policies to accomplish things (Klein 2014, 133).

The Millenium Ecosystem Assessment was carried out to assess the consequences of ecosystem change for the well-being of humans. Ecosystem services are the benefits that humans gain from ecosystems which can be broken down into four types of services. Provisional services are those including food, water, timber, and fiber. Regulating services are ones that affect the climate, floods, water quality, waste, and disease. Cultural services are those that provide recreational and spiritual benefits to humans. Finally, supporting services are those that are vital to the health of the ecosystem and, therefore, humans, including soil formation, photosynthesis, and nutrient cycling (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005, v). All of these services are relevant in the discussion of Indigenous environmentalism and protection. The harmful effects of ecosystem services degradation are often felt more by less wealthy communities as well (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005, 2). U.S. government actions put Indigenous people at risk, where they may negatively impact the water supplies of tribes in order to allow mining. The negative impact on drinking water can also have an impact on food supply, such as wild rice beds, and the entire ecosystem as a whole. With the negligence of the government and large corporations, Indigenous lands are at a higher risk for degradation, making them feel more drastic impacts of climate change. Cultural services are most relevant to Indigenous communities

as the loss of land and wildlife drastically impacts their cultural identity. There is a concern for the loss of certain local plants and animals that are important to the religious and cultural aspects of each tribe. The actions that harm Indigenous communities, which are also the ones they work to fight against, have negative impacts of supporting services, putting the entire ecosystem as well as the community at risk.

*Hardships of the Anishinaabe and Indigenous Communities due to Climate Change.* The loss of one species may not mean much to us, but it can have a huge impact on Anishinaabe culture and ways of life. Wolves are a great example of this. Wolves are absolutely vital for controlling deer populations and are an important piece of the food chain (Keuthan 2022). Despite this, we have seen their protections be stripped away countless times. The Trump Administration is one in particular that made the decision to strip gray wolves of their federal Endangered Species Act protections (Popovich et al.. 2021 ). The loss of wolves, in particular, is relevant to Indigenous culture, something I will get to later on. This is just one example of a species that is vital to the survival of their ecosystem.

One of the worst effects of the climate crisis is on plant species. The current warming we experience changes weather patterns, leading to droughts, floods, and other natural disasters, making it incredibly difficult for plant species to survive in their natural habitats. Despite how simple we may view a plant species, the loss of one can be detrimental to the ecosystem, even causing a complete collapse of the food chain. If a vital plant species were to disappear, we would see a significant decline in the insects within the ecosystem as well as a loss of some animal species due to the loss of food, eventually creating a domino effect within the ecosystem (Lindsey 2022). Discussing the loss of plant species is difficult because there are a variety of causes. Within the last 40-50 years, there has been a significant loss of nitrogen in hundreds of

plant species. It is also important to note that with the rise in temperature, crops become more vulnerable, and insects are driven to new territories, which can lead to the destruction of native plant populations. The future of plants is uncertain but not promising with the current views on their importance by the average person (Cho 2022).

All of this loss has a link to Indigenous culture. The reason for such an extensive history of environmental issues and our current political system is that there is a clear relation to Indigenous people. All of the harm the government has caused and allowed has led to more problems for Indigenous people. The relation between the environmental movement and capitalism is explained because it also relates back to how the climate crisis has affected Indigenous people. The losses explained above are relevant to Indigenous culture and the philosophies of the Anishinaabe tribe, which aim to protect biodiversity and all forms of wildlife.

As explained above, although the climate crisis will come to affect everyone in some way, Indigenous people are often the most affected by issues caused by or related to climate change. The loss of ecosystems is felt more by Indigenous communities than any others because of the relationships they have with nature. The Anishinaabe, in particular, have a loving and respectful relationship with the wildlife and nature surrounding them. They are careful not to cause any harm to it, and despite the fact that they prove to be more environmentally friendly than the rest of the population, they still feel the worst effects of the climate crisis. Historically, we have seen a long conflict between the United States government and the Anishinaabe people. The Anishinaabe were forced onto reservations in 1842 in order to make the area available to miners, resulting in disease and poverty. Despite this, they successfully defended their rights, being sure that their people were still able to hunt, gather, and fish on ceded territories, a right



they fought for (Langston, 145). With the help of the United States, the Anishinaabe have come to feel the effects of climate change.

## **Chapter 2: The Environmental History of the Anishinaabe**

*Cultural History.* Anishinaabe refers to Indigenous tribes or groups of culturally and linguistically related First Nations living in both Canada and the United States, more specifically concentrated around the Great Lakes. “While Anishinaabe is most commonly used to describe Ojibwe people, it can refer to other First Nations that also identify as Anishinaabe. These include, for example, Chippewa, Odawa, Potawatomi, Algonquin, Saulteaux, Nipissing and Mississauga First Nations, as well as some Oji-Cree and Métis” (Hele 2022). They live from the “Ottawa River Valley west across Northern Ontario and to the plains of Saskatchewan south to the northeast corner of North Dakota, northern Minnesota, and Michigan, as well as the northern shores of Lakes Ontario and Erie” (Hele 2022).

The ancestors of the current Anishinaabe people, also known as the Ojibwe amongst other names, lived primarily throughout the Northeast of North America. Due to a combination of prophecies and warfare, the tribe began their long and slow journey Westward around 1,500 years ago. One Ojibwe prophecy, in particular, urged them to move West to a place where food grew on water, a clear reference to wild rice. Through oral history and archaeological records, we can see that they moved in small groups following the Great Lakes Westward. Today, the Anishinaabe are scattered throughout the United States, occupying areas of Michigan, bordering on Lake Superior mainly. They also occupy “over the entire north coast of Lake Superior, to the falls of St. Mary’s and extending even east of this point into Upper Canada” (Warren 2009, 14). They reside primarily in the wooded country covered with deep and interminable forests. The

surrounding land is filled with beautiful lakes and streams, as well as forests filled with Indigenous plants to the climate in which they reside (Warren 2009, 15).

The southern branch of the Ojibwe people became known as the Lake Superior Chippewa. They migrated across northern Wisconsin and eventually reached Madeline Island, Wisconsin. There, they found wild rice in the water. Madeline Island became an important place to the Ojibwe people, serving as both an economic center, but also a spiritual one. In 1745, an Ojibwe band left Madeline Island and migrated to an area they named Wawaagon in reference to their torch fishing practices (Warren 2009, 15).

They historically lived in small groups, with their leaders consulting extensively with community members on what to do in situations that could affect the tribe. This resulted in many areas having Ojibwe people, including the Canadian provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, Québec, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, as well as the U.S. states, including Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota (Wiigwaasi Jiimaan 2023). They speak in Anishinaabemowin, which is spoken in most of these areas, with a strong concentration around the communities of the Great Lakes. Roughly 35,000 in Canada consider this to be their mother tongue based on a 2016 consensus (Hele 2022).

Ojibwe communities were based on groupings, or “doodem,” which determined a person’s place within their community. Each grouping represented a different aspect of Anishinaabe society. Political leaders came from the loon or crane clans, and warriors came from the bear, martin, lynx, and wolf groupings. Gift Giving was also a large part of their culture and society. During many ceremonies, gift-giving would occur, fulfilling kinship and reciprocal relationships. The idea of mutual assistance is very relevant within their culture and society.

Their gift-giving eventually allowed them to establish economic and diplomatic ties with other Anishinaabe communities (Minnesota Historical Society 2023).

Although not very well known, the Anishinaabe were vital to education reform in Minnesota and eventually the rest of the country. “In 1969, two Ojibwe educators, Rosemary Christensen (Bad River) and Will Antell (White Earth), spearheaded the formation of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) to combat the disproportionately high dropout rate and low achievement of Native students in public schools” (Peacock 2022). Christensen and Antell’s early work allowed other Anishinaabe and Dakota leaders to also push for education reform and the development of scholarship programs. The push for these programs would eventually result in more access to higher education as well as culture, language, and academic support programs in public schools, tribal schools, and tribal colleges for Indigenous kids.

*European Contact.* The Anishinaabe have greatly shaped each area that they live in. The fur trade is one in particular. In the 1600s, the French arrived to the Great Lakes. This resulted in the Anishinaabe and other Indigenous groups trading fur for guns, tools, pots and pans, utensils, cloth, and alcohol with the French. This trade created a large global impact on the economy. The fur trade brought forth the rise of beaver in European fashion. The Anishinaabe are also responsible for the first harvesting and boiling of maple syrup. The Anishinaabe were also the first to develop toboggan and snowshoes during winters in Minnesota. The migration of Anishinaabe people into the Western Great Lakes region during the late 1600s and early 1700s resulted in the moving of the Dakota to the Southern region of Minnesota alongside the promise of better hunting.

*Sustainable Practices.* Anishinaabe has many meanings to it, many of which come from one of the origin stories of the tribe. Elder Basil H. Johnston explains that Anishinaabe translates

to “Beings made out of nothing” or “Spontaneous Beings.” Anishinaabe can also be translated to mean “Second Man,” referring to the story of Nanabozo and the Great Flood. Another meaning to it, according to an elder from the Garden River First Nation, is “The Men or People Who Live upon the Earth in the Right Way.” This meaning, in particular, is most relevant to my writing. A large portion of their beliefs stems from the idea that the environment must be respected correctly. Their entire way of life consistently considers being environmentally aware and being sure to keep the environment in good shape (Hele 2022). With everything they do, they are sure to do it correctly, something that we do not see from most other people, especially in the United States.

The earliest Ojibwe people lived off the land, hunting and fishing, as well as harvesting wild rice, making their own maple syrup, and gathering other necessities from nature. Until the 20th century, they primarily lived in wigwams and traveled the vast system of waterways surrounding the area by canoe. Their culture is known for its generosity, with gift-giving being a large part of their society. Reciprocal relationships and mutual assistance are very common within the tribe and also bleed into their relationship with nature. In the same way, they care for the people who live around them, they also care for the environment.

The surrounding environment provides ample opportunities for the tribe. Birch bark, in particular, has been a staple within the community, used for building materials, especially within homes. The hides of animals such as deer and moose, leftover from what had been eaten, could be used to make moccasins and clothing. They are very resourceful when killing as they are sure to use the entire animal correctly. This includes using the entirety of an animal when killing it. Buffalo, in particular, is a great example of this historically, where the hides were used for clothing, the bones for tools and toys, the meat for food, and the leftover pieces of the body were

used for a variety of ceremonial purposes. Proper hunting is also common in order to ensure that the animal dies in the most humane and respectful way possible. They want to make sure the death of the animal is as painless as possible and that there is a meaning to its death. There are no issues of overhunting and putting local populations at risk. Their lives also revolved around the seasons and the changes that came as they passed through. “In the winter months, the tribe would separate into their extended family units and travel to their hunting camps. In this way, they could hunt in a specific territory without competition from other hunters and ensure that overhunting would not occur. In the summer, they would return to their summer homes where fish, wild rice, and berries were abundant” (Open Library Ontario). Everything they had done that involved nature made them reflect upon their relationship with the environment. They were always careful to preserve their surrounding environment, being sure to never take too much from the Earth. All of their habits had a way of prioritizing the health of the local plant and animal life, seeing them as equals.

In Wisconsin, the rights of the Anishinaabe to hunt and fish on lands they had ceded in 1837 and 1842 treaties were basically ignored by the state. They attempted to regulate fishing on Anishinaabe reservations to the point where they began arresting members of the tribe for fishing on the reservation. A federal court eventually ruled that the state did not have the right to regulate hunting and fishing on the reservations. However, this stopped the government from interfering in what was going on on reservations land but did not address the tribes hunting and fishing rights within territories ceded in 1837 and 1842 treaties. The Wisconsin Supreme Court eventually ignored the federal court’s findings, stating that Wisconsin’s admission to the United States ultimately ended Anishinaabe off-reservation hunting and fishing rights. Along with this, they ruled that the state could regulate hunting and fishing on reservations as well. Although

slightly modified in 1933 to ensure that regulation could only occur on privately owned reservation lands, this was a huge violation of Anishinaabe rights (Milwaukee Public Museum 2023).

In 1934, the United States Congress passed the Indian Restoration Act (IRA), ending several long standing policies that seemed to destroy Indigenous culture. This allowed for reservation lands that were sold to non-Indigenous people to possibly be bought back by the tribes involved. The IRA also encouraged tribes to form their own internal governments. Around the 1960s, there was a cultural resurgence among Indigenous tribes in the United States. In 1972, a major change occurred for the Wisconsin Anishinaabe. The Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that the Bad River and Red Cliff Anishinaabe bands had the right to fish in Lake Superior without state regulation affecting them. Similarly, in 1978, the Lac Court Oreilles band took a case to the federal district court after two members of their tribe were arrested for spearfishing off their reservation. Unfortunately, the court ruled against them, arguing that a treaty that established their reservations effectively ended their off-reservation rights to hunt and fish (Milwaukee Public Museum 2023).

With time came more hunting and fishing rights for Wisconsin Anishinaabe but also major setbacks. In 1990 it was ruled that they were entitled to take 50% of the deer harvest on the ceded territory. It is important to note that this did not stop the state from possibly banning hunting in the summer and after sundown for safety reasons. It was then determined that the Eleventh Amendment to the Constitution protected states against lawsuits from Indigenous tribes. In 1991, it was also decided that the harvesting of timber resources was not a usual activity for the Wisconsin Anishinaabe, keeping them from harvesting trees for timber. Despite

the lack of timber, they were allowed to use other products from the forests, such as maple sap, birchbark, and firewood, without government regulation (Milwaukee Public Museum 2023).

During the time in which these decisions were being made, there was a lot of backlash from non-Indigenous Wisconsin locals as they believed that the federal courts gave these special rights to the Anishinaabe when in fact, they were retained rights. These were rights the Anishinaabe had always possessed during treaty negotiations. The backlash led to a change in Anishinaabe hunting and fishing patterns as they attempted to diffuse the tensions. They began to take significantly less of fish and deer populations than what they were allowed in order to leave more than enough for local hunters. These laws for the Anishinaabe have not changed much since then (Milwaukee Public Museum 2023).

Throughout history, Native American communities have played a key role in environmentalism, and as we have seen, Native American communities are actively working to stop environmental racism and climate change. They are one of the groups most affected by the climate crisis. It would make sense why they are at the center of the movement. Native Americans must stand up for themselves because no one else will. As we will see in situations such as Standing Rock, Native American communities are put at risk because of large corporations and the fossil fuel industry. Being that the government also does not care about these issues, Native American communities are put in an uncomfortable position. Their history shows us the dedication they have had to the environment for so long. These stories hold a lot of importance as they contain the knowledge of their ancestors and are very meaningful to the culture of the Anishinaabe.

*Oral History and Environmentalism.* Their origin stories of how they came to the locations in which we can find them today are related to their environmental care. Anishinaabe

oral history explains their migration to the Minnesota region around 900 CE. This was a result of seven prophets appearing out of the ocean, in which each told a prophecy of what would happen to the Anishinaabe people. The first said that they should move West or they would perish, knowing where to settle once they found the place in which food grew on water. This food is known as wild rice. The other prophets predicted their future as well. The coming of Europeans and the great suffering they would bring to the tribe was predicted. These prophets also predicted that the Anishinaabe would become lost spiritually, lose their lands, the taking of their children, Christianization, and banning of their spiritual beliefs for a period of time, as well as decline of their language and cultural practices. Finally, the seventh prophet told them of the time of healing that would eventually come after this period of great suffering. The knowledge of these teachings, the teachings of the Seven Fires, is incredibly important to Anishinaabe people to know why they are in the areas that they are in and how they ended up where they did. These stories show us the grave history of the Anishinaabe and everything they overcame (Peacock 2022).

The Anishinaabe have a very vibrant culture due to their variety of art forms, such as birchbark ash baskets and boxes. Birchbark, in particular, is mentioned very often within Anishinaabe storytelling and daily life. Storytelling is an art within Anishinaabe culture. It has served as a way for them to share their teachings for generations and continues to do so. Winter is the time in particular in which storytelling occurs the most. This stems from their historic moving to new locations each season. During the winter, they would move into large wigwams made of birchbark, living off of the food they had collected before winter had started. During these cold nights, storytelling would often occur. These stories are roots that ground them back to their ancestors and their beginning. Everything they know of their origins comes from these



stories. It is the oldest way of teaching and allows the elders to pass down important knowledge about not only the tribe's origins and ancestry but also just general knowledge about the world around them (Peacock 2022).

In Anishinaabe history, water-dwelling animals and plants are known to be sacred and important within their culture. The location and migration patterns of various species of fish often determined the movement of the tribe as they sought to stay near food sources throughout the year. Their relationship with the Great Lakes is also one known to be very important to their history. Water in itself has a sacred background in Anishinaabe culture as they were once told the prophecy of how they must migrate to an area in which food grows on water, referring to the growth of wild rice. Wild rice, because of this prophecy, became an important part of Anishinaabe culture as the planting and harvesting became a sacred tradition, as well as remains an important food source for the majority of the community. The majority of their storytelling involves water in one way or another, including many of their creation stories, and often relates back to the idea of their care for the environment (Kozich 2018).

Around the same time as they were working on education reform, social justice advocacy was also brought to light within Anishinaabe communities. The American Indian Movement (AIM) was created in 1968 to combat police harassment and the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples. It was eventually seen as a return to spirituality for Indigenous peoples as a way to combat the long history of injustice against them, as well as a fight against the policies throughout the country that put Indigenous people at risk, demanding that the government finally step up and protect Indigenous peoples and culture (Peacock 2022).

Through their storytelling and philosophies, they have been able to continue their work in environmentalism. We can learn from Indigenous communities how our relationship with the

environment cannot be strictly taken from nature. We just learn how to give back and respect the environment, and the best way for us to learn this is through the knowledge of the Anishinaabe tribe. Listening to Indigenous communities about their struggles and learning more about the Anishinaabe philosophies on the environment will provide us with better resources for environmental care and protection. Although this is not a topic that is always taken seriously, we must learn to have this message pushed forward and brought up in media coverage. Besides their philosophies on the environment, Anishinaabe people should be taken more seriously because they are the most at risk. They experience the climate crisis daily, despite their devotion to caring for the environment.

### **Chapter 3: Environmental Philosophies**

*Creation Stories.* Storytelling, in particular, is one way in which they have encouraged this idea of respect and care toward nature. For the rest of this chapter, I will be going through what I found to be stories most relevant to my explanation, along with how it relates to our current situation in the United States. I will begin first with one of their well-known creation stories, “*Ma’iingan* (Wolf) and First Man.” The story begins as the wolf and first man were created as brothers as well as companions. The Creator told them to live together and name all of the other plants and animals around them. Once that was done, Creator told them they could no longer live together and that they must lead separate lives. Despite their separation, Creator encouraged them to look out for each other. They should continue to have a mutually beneficial relationship despite no longer being brothers. This story of creation is one that is incredibly important to the Anishinaabe people and very relevant to the current situations discussed in my writing. In 2013, a Wisconsin mandate resulted in an official wolf trapping and hunting season. As a result, the Anishinaabe people conducted a study in order to manage wolves in a proper and

respectful manner in order to honor the wishes of their ancestors appropriately. Just several years later, hunters killed 218 wolves in the span of 3 days, exceeding both state and tribal limits.

Despite the warnings from the tribe, the Wisconsin government continued with their rulings and put a critical species in danger. It is clear that the government should include members of the Anishinaabe tribe in their decision-making. The wolves are absolutely vital to the local ecosystem as well as the Anishinaabe people, regardless of the connection they may have due to their creation story (Keuthan 2022).

The story of “Skywoman Falling” is another one in particular that always comes to mind when thinking about the humanization of animals and plants. The story begins with Skywoman falling to the Earth. Her fall is slowed and cushioned by a group of geese attempting to protect her. They enlisted the help of other animals as they could not keep Skywoman afloat. The animals began to gather: loons, swans, otters, fish, and beavers, attempting to keep her above water. A large turtle then offered his shell for Skywoman to stand upon. Because she needed land, the animals, one by one, began to dive to grab mud from the bottom. Many lost their lives in the process, and those that did survive came up empty-handed. One muskrat, the tiniest of them all, gave his life in order to bring mud up to create land for Skywoman. By spreading the mud across the turtle’s shell, they created what is now Earth. “Not by Skywoman alone, but from the alchemy of all the animal’s gifts coupled with her deep gratitude. Together they formed what we know today as Turtle Island, our home” (Kimmerer 2015, 4). Skywoman brought a bundle clutched in her hand of fruits and seeds of various plants. She scattered them onto the new land, allowing each one to flourish and giving the animals a new source of food.

It is said that sweetgrass was the first plant to grow on Earth after Skywoman had come. The Anishinaabe honor it as one of their four sacred plants, braided as though they are braiding

the long strand of mother earth's hair. This is a way for them to show her love and affection, a form of gratitude for all that she has given us. The story of Skywoman is considered an Original Instruction to the tribes, meaning that they use this story as a compass, guiding them through their relationship with nature. The original people that came from Skywoman lived by way of understanding the Original Instructions. They learned to ethically hunt and gather to avoid affecting the local ecosystem. Kimmerer suggests that we have "worn out our welcome" by ignoring these Original Instructions (Kimmerer 2015, 8).

When Skywoman arrived on Earth, she was pregnant. One of her reasons behind working to create Turtle Island was because she knew this would eventually be land her grandchildren would inherit. She was sure to prioritize that this flourishing did not cease to exist after her lifetime. "For all of us, becoming Indigenous to a place means living as if your children's future mattered, to take care of the land as if our lives, both material and spiritual, depended on it" (Kimmerer 2015, 9). This is very relevant to how many older generations view the climate crisis. They prioritize their wealth and well-being because they know that the problems we are so concerned about are not going to affect them. They will be gone before they truly begin to feel the effects of climate change.

This story, vital to Anishinaabe culture, is a perfect example of a positive and healthy relationship between mankind and the Earth. There is mutual care between Skywoman and the animals, as well as the plants she brings to Turtle Island. Without the help of the animals, Skywoman would not have survived the fall, and without Skywoman, Turtle Island would not exist for the animals to live on, nor would the fruits and plants she brought down with her. For the Anishinaabe, this story is one that they believe should be considered instructions rather than

labeled as some kind of myth. It shows us how our relationship with the environment is broken and how we can work to fix that.

*The 7 Grandfather Teachings.* The Teachings of the 7 Grandfathers is a very important story in Anishinaabe culture. The seven teachings are the principles of character that should be held by each Anishinaabe person and carried through their life. The principles include Love, Respect, Bravery, Truth, Honesty, Humility, and Wisdom. Each principle is represented by an animal. Truth is the turtle, as he was here during the creation of Earth. The turtle lives a slow life as he understands the importance of his journey. This shows us to understand where we are meant to be. Bravery is represented by the bear as the mother bear is courageous enough to protect her young. It allows you to find your inner strength. Respect is represented by the buffalo as the buffalo gives all of itself to sustain the human's way of living because he respects the balance of life. This shows you how to treat others around you. Humility is represented by the wolf because the wolf lives in a pack where being alone makes you an outcast. This teaches one to live a life without arrogance and to find balance. Honesty is represented by the raven as the raven does not change, teaching us to be ourselves. Wisdom is represented by the beaver because he uses his natural gift to ensure he and his community will survive. This teaches one to respect their own limitations. Finally, love is represented by the eagle because the eagle is capable of flying the closest to the Creator. This teaches one to love oneself in order to find peace (Uniting Three Fires Against Violence).

These teachings are a map of how one in the Anishinaabe should live. Each one being represented by an animal goes into this idea of their relationship with nature as well. The story explains that they found that humans did not have these qualities, and they must be taught them. They learn these teachings from the seven grandfathers, but they find all of these characteristics

in the animals. Each animal is a principle humans should live by (Uniting Three Fires Against Violence). This is a perfect example of a positive view of nature and the relationship between humans and nature that we should strive for.

*Storytelling Traditions.* Throughout their rich history, the Anishinaabe have accumulated a long and extensive list of stories passed on through generations. Many of these stories are related to the environment and have influenced their views on plants, animals, and their surrounding environment as a whole. There are three important points to consider when discussing Anishinaabe philosophies. First, humans cannot view themselves as the only beings on this planet that matter, as it puts other beings at risk. Second, all of these things were made by the Creator and, therefore, must survive and prosper in order for the balance intended by the Creator to continue. Lastly, the teachings of this tribe are complicated but important to our understanding of our current climate crisis and the possible solutions surrounding it. Their knowledge of the environment could be a way to work against the climate crisis (Geniusz 2015, 9).

“According to Anishinaabe culture, before taking anything from the natural world, one must remember to give thanks to the being who is asked to make the sacrifice and ask that being’s permission” (Geniusz 2015, 9). In *Plants Have So Much To Give Us, All We Have To Do Is Ask*, Mary Siisip Geniusz explains the botanical teachings of the Anishinaabe. Many of these explanations show us that humankind can be seen as the weakest link in nature as we rely on every other living thing to survive. Geniusz explains that a large part of their philosophy is that without these other things, we cannot survive, and therefore we must have a mutual relationship with nature (Geniusz 2015, 15). As the Creator put these plants on the Earth for a purpose, we must value them and understand their importance. They believe that they are gifted with this

knowledge of plants, allowing them to use them in the safest way possible for the local ecosystem.

The Anishinaabe gives other living organisms a human-like consideration. When learning about rocks as a child, Geniusz was told of their language and its difference from ours. Living and Non-living beings view us in the way that we view them: temporary. Speaking to plants for permission to use them is something seen in many readings from the Anishinaabe. Members of the tribe acknowledge that it may seem odd at first to talk to plants but that we should still acknowledge them as the “persons” that they are. She explains that when one accepts this gift a plant is giving, it is becoming a part of them. “Speak to the plant and tell it who needs it. Ask before taking. Promise that the plant’s grandchildren will live after it and that you will protect them in that place. To fulfill this promise, one must know how that plant reproduces. Never take the only individual plant of its kind in an area, for the plant is trying to establish itself there” (Geniusz 2015, 22). Understanding the value of each plant to its local ecosystem is absolutely vital. For something we may view as simple, they see it as having an incredible amount of meaning. This shows us that humans can not view themselves as the only important beings on this planet. Here is the clear relation to the current state of the climate. When humans view themselves as most important, they choose to belittle other living things, using them for our liking and never considering the harm we may be causing. Geniusz explains, “And it might help us realize how much harm humans can do to the balance when they see themselves as the only beings on this planet” (Geniusz 2015, 21). When we view ourselves as the only important being, we ignore how fragile each ecosystem is and how slight changes can result in complete destruction. Our actions show how important it is that we change this mindset and attempt to view other living things as equally important.

Punishment against humans is also a theme within these stories. This can be seen in a story regarding Nanabozho, the Anishinaabe Original Man. When walking through the world, he was dismayed by villages he had stumbled upon in which they were not taking care of their gardens, their fishnets were not being repaired, and the children were not being taught the proper way to live. Instead of using firewood and caches of corn to feed themselves, he found them lying underneath maple trees, catching the syrup in their mouths. They had not been doing their ceremonies for each other, they had become lazy and taken the gifts of their Creator for granted; he knew they must be punished. He took gallons of water and poured them into the maple trees, diluting the syrup, making it the thin and barely sweet syrup we know today. This was done as a reminder of their possibilities and responsibilities (Kimmerer 2015, 63). Humans are often ungrateful for the ways in which nature provides for us, and we can see this in the majority of treatment of the environment from humans.

Referring to plants as animals in a more human way is something that is also very relevant within Anishinaabe writing and storytelling. During her time as a Professor, Kimmerer was able to find her own teachers, the plants she was working with. “All around me were my good teachers, the plants. I found good mentors, too, warm and kind professors who were doing heart-driven science, whether they could admit it or not. And yet there was always something tapping at my shoulder, willing me to turn around. When I did, I did not know how to recognize what stood behind me” (Kimmerer 2015, 42).

This theme of permission from the environment is a frequent part of both storytelling and the current ways of the Anishinaabe. In Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass*, she explains this in relation to sweetgrass. They do not sell sweetgrass because it is a gift. It is given to us and, therefore, should be given to others. She explains how a friend of hers was a ceremonial



firekeeper which involves using a lot of sweetgrasses. In order for the sweetgrass to maintain its essence for the ceremony, it cannot be bought. In the same way, he would ask the sweetgrass for permission to use it, he asks those selling it to give it to him. "For the plant to be sacred, it cannot be sold" (Kimmerer, 27). Sweetgrass is from Mother Earth, and therefore it must be taken in a proper and respectful way. After being given permission to take, they return a gift to the earth, and the sweetgrass is braided and given as a gift. "The sweetgrass is kept in motion. When Wally gives sweetgrass to the fire, it is a gift that has passed from hand to hand, growing richer as it is honored in every exchange" (Kimmerer 2015, 27). Kimmerer then goes on to explain the skewed view of gifts and sharing in many societies we see today. "This is hard to grasp for societies steeped in notions of private property, where others are, by definition, excluded from sharing. Practices such as posting land against trespass, for example, are expected and accepted in a property economy but are unacceptable in an economy where land is seen as a gift to all" (Kimmerer 2015, 27). This relates directly to how greed is the cause of the majority of our issues. We put value on the wrong things and put the environment at risk due to that.

These philosophies come from the religious beliefs of these people. "What is necessary is to acknowledge the Creator and the idea of balance that Creator wove into the fabrics of our universe. All the parts of creation have special jobs. Each species has special jobs. Each individual has a special job. All of the different orders of life, all of the different species, and individuals have both a physical and spiritual purpose. And all of the jobs are necessary if the whole of creation is to be kept in balance"(Geniusz 2015, 21). Unlike other religions, it does not matter who or what the Creator is, but rather the intentions set by the Creator. Geniusz explains that we are all brothers and sisters in life. Plants are closer to the Creator than we will ever be because they were created before mankind. Therefore they are willing to give themselves to

maintain the harmony but should receive the honor they deserve for their sacrifices (Geniusz 2015, 21).

The reason there is so much focus on storytelling is because these stories create the conversation of conservation. The stories of the Anishinaabe promote this idea of environmental care in one way or another. Although there are many in which this is the clear and exact meaning of the story, there are also many in which they do not explicitly speak of it. Despite this, Anishinaabe culture has a large focus on environmental care and the relationship they have with nature and the earth. So, regardless of whether environmental respect is the main purpose of the story, it still comes through within the majority of their stories due to this being such a large part of their culture.

*Anishinaabe Philosophies in Practice.* Although many may read this and think about how obvious of a solution it is to simply care more for nature, due to the severity of the situation we are currently in, it appears that even the most simple things may be incredibly important to our progress. As so many of us are lucky enough to be in a place where food and clean water are accessible to us, we do not consider where it comes from and the steps that are required before it comes to us. We often do not consider those who are in situations where they do not have the same things that we do and are put at risk because of the government. Anishinaabe philosophies are a perfect example of how all people should view nature and the environment. We should not view nature as something for our taking but rather as something that we must cohabitate with. Plants and animals are essential to our survival, and with the rate we use them, we are putting the human race in a very uncomfortable position.

Kimmerer also raises an interesting point on the value we put on food. She explains that when we do not conceptualize how much goes into the food we consume, there is no gratitude

for it. When we do not consider how life was given in order to continue ours, we cannot be satisfied. “Something is broken when the food comes on a Styrofoam tray wrapped in a slippery plastic, a carcass of a being whose only chance at life was a cramped cage. That is not a gift of life; it is a theft” (Kimmerer 2015, 31). The current system of how we consume food leaves the spirit longing. Our food system is a collection of disappointing uses of life, no longer a gift from the animal or the earth. We must find a way to view the earth as a gift rather than a convenience.

Kimmerer recounts her childhood and how she was taught to leave no trace and leave a place better than how she found it. Before leaving a camping place, they were sure to leave it spotless, checking several times for burnt matchsticks or pieces of paper before heading out. They were also sure to leave firewood behind, a gift for the next person. Kimmerer’s emphasis on leaving no trace is just one way in which we should think of how we can help on an individual level (Kimmerer 2015).

Referring to plants as animals in a more human way is something that is also very relevant within Anishinaabe writing and storytelling. During her time as a Professor, Kimmerer was able to find her own teachers, the plants she was working with. “All around me were my good teachers, the plants. I found good mentors, too, warm and kind professors who were doing heart-driven science, whether they could admit it or not. And yet there was always something tapping at my shoulder, willing me to turn around. When I did, I did not know how to recognize what stood behind me” (Kimmerer 2015, 42).

In the United States, there is a hierarchy based on intelligence as well as the food chain, in which humans are considered to be at the top. This way of thinking is the opposite of how we should think, as we are at fault for the destruction of many plant and animal species, and they would also be able to survive without us when we could not survive without them. In Indigenous

cultures, humans are often regarded as “the younger brother of Creation,” something that we should consider more (Kimmerer 2015, 9). There is wisdom in nature, and without accepting the guidance that the Anishinaabe have accepted, we are setting ourselves up for failure.

#### **Chapter 4: Environmental Racism and Indigenous Representation**

*Indigenous Environmental Injustices.* The United States is currently one of the top contributors to climate change. It is important to note how even during times when the government has claimed to prioritize the climate crisis, they have ignored both the ideas of BIPOC environmentalists and actively put people of color in harm with their actions. Racism and climate change, unfortunately, go hand in hand. Before even beginning to discuss the issues inside of the country, it is clear that the United States government is willing to put poorer countries at risk because, regardless of how much money we have, we refuse to do anything correctly. By prioritizing our wealth over climate change, the United States puts the citizens of poorer countries at risk as they suffer greatly from climate-related issues.

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment of all people in relation to the environment, meaning that no group should be more affected by the climate crisis than others. Within the idea of environmental justice, there is environmental racism which is when some people are at a disadvantage in relation to the climate crisis because of race. The environmental justice movement has gained more traction in recent years. Movements for environmental justice have begun to be taken into consideration when making laws. Although it is not as acknowledged as it should be, this is a great step forward for the movement. With this, many people point out how Indigenous communities have been doing these things for ages in comparison to conventions taking place currently (Pellow 2007, 83). Today, many low-income communities and communities with high populations of people of color are more affected by environmental issues

as they are often targeted. Within the United States, the government is notorious for ignoring environmental injustice, most well known among Indigenous communities. The most notorious example of this would be Standing Rock, although not related to the Anishinaabe, a prime example of the United States' issues with greed. This example has drawn a lot of attention from news sources and environmentalists. The issue with Standing Rock surrounds the government attempting to route a pipeline through Indigenous lands. Originally, the pipeline was to be routed near the town of Bismarck, North Dakota, crossing the Missouri River. The pipeline was ruled out for the area due to the high possibility of it compromising the town's drinking water. They then chose to reroute it in order to cross underneath Lake Oahe, putting the drinking water of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe at risk. Despite the pushback from the tribe as well as environmentalists across the country as the story began to gain traction, the government insisted that it would be fine for the tribe. Out of concern for a primarily white community, they chose to reroute the pipeline to affect an Indigenous community instead (Williams 2021, 41).

If an oil spill were to occur from the pipeline, there would be disastrous results. An oil spill of that magnitude would cause a variety of environmental issues and cause the city's population to lose its drinking water supply. Depending on the spill's size, it could take years to clean up properly. Even a small leak would ruin the drinking water supply, causing a crisis for the city's residents. Interestingly enough, when the Native Americans of Standing Rock expressed the same concern, they were seen as overreacting or crazy. Those pushing the pipeline explained that the pipeline needed to be created. Although the residents of Bismarck had the same concerns as those of Standing Rock, they were treated very differently. The residents of Bismarck had their concerns and fears understood by the government and those who wanted to put the pipeline there. As for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, their concerns were ignored. They

had to fight for their rights to clean drinking water and health. Not only did they have to fight for their right to clean water, the pipeline crossing their land directly violated the Fort Laramie Treaty. The Dakota Access Pipeline violated Article II of the Fort Laramie Treaty, which stated that Native Americans are guaranteed the undisturbed use and occupation of reservation lands. The crossing of reservation land by the Dakota Access Pipeline would disturb the use and occupation of reservation land by the Sioux tribe. It would also pose a serious risk to the survival of the tribe and their cultural resources (Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian 2023).

According to the United Nations, Indigenous communities are exposed to toxic contaminants due to mining and extraction. Because Indigenous communities are typically viewed as secluded and away from the rest of society, these corporations do not care as much about the effects on these communities. Studies show that Indigenous women, in particular, are the ones most affected by the climate crisis. They explain, “Devastating impacts on maternal health include sterility, reproductive system cancers, decreased lactation, and the inability to produce healthy children” (United Nations 2020, 2). These toxins appear to have a major effect on Indigenous women during pregnancy, causing issues with breastfeeding, infertility and even possibly causing miscarriages (United Nations 2020, 3). This, again, is just a small part of the damage Native American communities are experiencing.

There are many ways in which Indigenous people are affected by the climate crisis that does not include pipelines. Many coastal communities rely heavily on seafood for their diet. With warming temperatures and biodiversity loss, many of these communities are put at risk as the animals they rely on are dying off. They continue to lose their land due to climate change as well as the animals and plants they rely on for both food and cultural significance. “These are

communities that have relied on the land for generations, building an intimate knowledge of the natural cycles of plants, animals, and weather. Unlike the traditional Western worldview that humanity can and should seek dominion over the environment, indigenous populations tend to view humanity as part of an interconnected whole” (Jones 2020). Even the slightest changes can cause the entire community to be negatively affected.

There is a middle ground we must fall into when regarding Indigenous people in the environmental movement. There is a need for more representation within the movement, as Indigenous people are often left out of conversations that they know more about than the majority of the people running these organizations. Although we need them to be considered more in the conversation, we also have to consider how wrong it would be to let the entire movement fall onto them. Although we see them as more knowledgeable, this should not allow us to remove ourselves from the work that must be done.

*Government Involvement.* The corruption of the United States government is a necessary topic in conversations surrounding environmental issues, particularly capitalism’s effects on the environment. Capitalism is one of the largest contributors to the climate crisis currently. Studies in 2017 came to show us that just 100 companies were responsible for 71% of global industrial greenhouse gas emissions over the last 30 or so years. Capitalism is centered around profit, and therefore profit is deeply prioritized in the United States. The entire basis of capitalism is profit, and if we were to change that, we would no longer be able to recognize it as capitalism. A recent trend, especially among those running as moderate Democrats, is the idea of ‘green capitalism.’ The issue with this is that capitalism is entirely about profit. Green initiatives are not the most economically efficient way, but they are the necessary way. That being said, an initiative cannot be both capitalist and green, as they are in direct violation of each other. Being that the

government will almost always choose the economy over the environment, capitalism comes out as the consistent victor in these scenarios. When profit is prioritized, the environment is put at risk. Fortunately, this discovery has led to a rise in the demand for climate action from large groups such as the Extinction Rebellion or the support for the Green New Deal (Lindsey 2022). Unfortunately, being that progressives are not often voted into office, ideas like these are difficult to reach. Although green initiatives are often written off as harmful to the economy, they underestimate how harmful the future effects of climate change will be on the economy. Natural disasters, flooding, and health crises are just a few that we have seen negatively affect the economy and will continue to do so as these phenomena become more regular with time (Wallace-Wells, 130).

With the rise in environmentalism, especially on an individual level, we also see a major rise in a lack of support for major corporations. This has resulted in many companies pledging to work on their carbon footprints. Although many of these companies are doing this as a form of greenwashing, a form of misleading information to appear more environmentally friendly to consumers, there are companies who are following through with their promises. Even though a lot of this has come from public pressure and a fear of losing business, it is still seen as a win for the environmental community. Companies can no longer ignore the long-term effects they cause on the environment and on financial markets. According to Saleha Noor's *Why We Need to Change Capitalism for Climate Action*, "The corporate world is starting to shift towards new ideas of how capitalism must function, which will not only result in the mitigation of environmental degradation but could also help solve the climate crisis as resources will be used more efficiently to spur innovation in green technology or tap into the market for potential sustainable investments which are estimated to be around \$26 trillion" (Noor 2021). Most



importantly, Noor explains the need for companies' actions to be mirrored by the government. Government action is absolutely vital to combatting the climate crisis. With this need, we will continue to see harmful initiatives go through for the sake of money. Even when large corporations choose to publicly support their concerns for the environment, they are more often than not doing this for the sake of publicity. Especially in the fossil fuel industry, their spending habits will give a better indication of their plans than their public press releases as they hide their decisions to block climate bills with prolific amounts of money (Aronoff, 95).

*Anishinaabe Environmental Injustice.* In 2002, the Lake Superior Band of Chippewa dealt with a similar problem. Although they had been living in that area for hundreds of years, an international mining company arrived near Lake Superior with the intention to burrow a mile deep to extract ore. This led to a battle between the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community of the Lake Superior Band of Chippewa and the government. If the mining company were to drill there, they would be putting the local water supply at risk. Polluting this groundwater would put the entire tribe at risk (Bienkowski 2012). Similarly to Standing Rock, when they expressed the same concerns as a primarily white community, they were treated very differently.

In 2011, a company called Gogebic Taconite of GTAC was formed in order to develop the largest open-pit mine. This would be just upstream of the Bad River Band's reservation on Lake Superior. The company later announced its plans to mine taconite ore. The mine's location would result in contaminated fish and water throughout the Indigenous communities living downstream of the mine. If their permits had been approved, the mine would have been located within ceded territories, also the locations in which the tribes held the rights to hunt, fish, and gather. Local tribe members were quick to point out how the mine was intentionally planned to be located there. For the Bad River Band, this land was vital to their survival. This is just another

example of Indigenous people being put at risk for profit. The residents of Hurley, a nearby town, argued that the proposed mine was the only thing that could rescue them from economic problems. Being that Hurley was just outside of the watershed that would be affected, they were pushing for the mine greatly, knowing that they could only benefit from its location being there. Many chose to ignore how harmful taconite mining could be to local water sources, wild rice, and, most importantly, the lives of the people living in the area (Langston 2017, 149). The local tribes feared that the groundwater pumping that would need to occur in order for the mine to exist would destroy their springs (Langston 2017, 150).

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, wild rice is a large part of Anishinaabe culture and life. Not only is it a large portion of the food they eat, but it is also considered a sacred gift from the Creator. Early storytelling explains that Anishinaabe was told to go to a land where food grew on water, resulting in them finding wild rice. Mines like the one described above put wild rice beds at risk. The largest undeveloped wetland complex in the upper Great Lakes was a wild rice bed. Keeping mines from being located in these areas prevents the loss of wildlife, which is vital to the cultural identity of the Anishinaabe. Besides wild rice, a mine like the one described above could completely change the local ecosystem, causing harm to a variety of species and therefore harming the people living there as well.

There is a lot of concern from the tribes as the MPCA had agreed to delay enforcement of existing regulations in regard to sulfate and mercury release from taconite plants. This lack of enforcement is a problem because the tribes have some rights in relation to land and water resources on ceded lands. As the government had made three land cession treaties with the Anishinaabe within the Lake Superior basin, reservations were under the control of the tribes, and they were also given the right to hunt, fish, and gather on ceded territories (Langston 2017,

157). Despite this, the United States government has continuously ignored these rights. Only due to the fight from the tribes did Wisconsin Act 71 result in 1997, requiring a moratorium on the issuance of permits for mining sulfide ore bodies. This would require companies to provide proof of their successful control of mining waste from other mines for at least ten years prior (Langston 2017, 157).

*Indigenous People in Environmentalism.* When the environmental movement began, Indigenous voices were silenced and marginalized. Although there has been progress as the movement has begun to acknowledge environmental injustice, it is still an issue that is experienced. Historically, the United States government has worked to exploit Indigenous people and their land in order to make a profit. Today, there are many Indigenous people working to fight for their rights in the environmental movement and in relation to environmental injustices. Indigenous environmental justice stems from their knowledge and philosophies on the environment. Despite this being the time in which Indigenous people are taken the most seriously, the deterioration of Indigenous lands continues due to the influence of the government. Our violent past has and continues to plague conservation and environmental efforts. Western environmental organizations have come to perpetuate racism towards Indigenous people believing they do not have enough to contribute to the movement.

As I explained throughout Chapter 3, many Indigenous people have important knowledge of the environment that the rest of us do not hold. The integration of Indigenous practices could be absolutely vital to our solutions to the climate crisis. Our current environmental movement refuses to acknowledge the knowledge and care held by Indigenous groups. They cannot accept that their knowledge could really help advance the environmental movement and make progress toward environmental justice. Today, the majority of environmental movements do not prioritize

BIPOC representation, especially for Indigenous people. Recent data shows that 80 percent of boards of directors and 85 percent of staff of environmental nonprofits are white. It is interesting to see how these groups are supposedly there to help minority communities affected by the climate crisis when they do not put in the effort to employ people of color. Many of these groups also fail to properly push the idea of fighting against environmental injustices as a part of the climate crisis (Foxworth 2020).

There are many other scenarios in which Indigenous peoples are at the frontlines of the negative impacts of climate change but are also at the forefront of the solutions (Stefani 2021). The fossil fuel and uranium industries are prime examples of this. They destroy communities and pollute entire ecosystems, often targeting those of Indigenous land, but Indigenous communities are at the forefront of solutions to this crisis. By working with Native-led organizations and nonprofits, they have made great strides to keep these industries from protecting critical areas, including the Florida Everglades, the Grand Canyon, Standing Rock, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Bears Ears National Monument, and others. There continue to be coalitions led by Indigenous community members to battle against new oil and gas drilling, advocating for low-income and minority communities (Stefani 2021).

Another area where we see Native Americans at the frontlines and the forefront involves wildlife protection. Indigenous territories hold a large portion of the world's remaining biodiversity, and while it is still an issue, biodiversity loss is declining much slower on Indigenous lands than anywhere else. Still, any loss of biodiversity affects these communities negatively. Since certain animals are so integral to the spirituality of some of these communities, losing them could be detrimental, which is why they must fight for wildlife protection. This brings forth a discussion on Biden's recent decision on the Willow Project. Not only will the

Willow Project put the majority of the area at risk, but it also increases the chances of biodiversity loss in the Arctic.

Our current environmental movement is primarily dominated by rich, white communities, or rather those least affected by the climate crisis. The current movement is one used to guilt the average person into seeing the unsustainability within their lives. It encourages people to try and force sustainability into their lives which typically includes buying eco-friendly substitutes from major corporations and pushing the idea of veganism. These ideas are not what we should be prioritizing within the environmental movement. We should currently be prioritizing electing better government officials, funding climate education, and, most importantly, working to recreate the movement to represent people of color better. The representation of BIPOC in environmentalism is absolutely vital to the movement. The United States has a long and extensive history of ignoring, neglecting, and even encouraging environmental injustice.

As I explained in Chapter 3, I believe it would be ideal for others to adopt these ways of thinking, and this would ideally come from Indigenous peoples being more included within the environmental movement. It is important for the people coming up with these ideas to be the movement's voice. Being that they are the ones who know the most about how to respect the environment, it would only make sense for them to lead the movement. Indigenous communities are leading the fight against climate change but are not being acknowledged by others as the leaders of this battle. According to the NRDC, "Indigenous leadership, knowledge, and innovation have been critical to protecting at-risk wildlife, fighting fossil fuels, transitioning to just and sustainable economies, countering destructive environmental rollbacks, and protecting some of the most carbon-rich places on earth" (Stefani 2021). Without these groups, the climate crisis could be worse than it already is. Without their fight, they would have no one to represent

them. Indigenous tribes are some of the least represented but the most exploited by capitalism.

There are so many more examples of how the government has ignored the concerns of Indigenous peoples when it comes to environmental-related issues.

There are many ways in which Indigenous groups and biodiversity are connected. As mentioned earlier in my writing, our current rate of species loss is unsustainable. The crisis that is biodiversity loss has gained a lot of attention over the last few years, specifically with the release of documentaries covering the topic. With that, there has been a lack of information regarding the connection between biodiversity loss and the loss of Indigenous cultures.

Indigenous people have always been the most concerned for biodiversity and have continued to push for conservation. Historically, they have also created a large amount of variety of agricultural biodiversity, something that we all rely on today. Although biodiversity has been declining, it is less affected on Indigenous land. Their traditional knowledge is effective in conserving biodiversity. Many tribes are known for regulating hunting and fishing, as well as being careful when taking from their local ecosystem. This is something that we do not see enough of in the United States, as many regulations related to preserving wildlife have been rolled back or changed under the Trump Administration.

Despite their knowledge of preserving biodiversity, Indigenous groups have been consistently excluded from the environmental movement. With this, we also see a large amount of push from the United States government to use their land for a variety of purposes, including drilling and resource use. This pressure from the government puts many Indigenous groups at risk of losing their cultural identity. Up to 80 percent of biodiversity can be found on Indigenous lands, showing that these cultures must be fought for and protected. The knowledge of many Indigenous peoples on the environment, especially those of the Anishinaabe, is at risk of being

lost. We must prioritize biodiversity, Indigenous culture, and environmental justice in the same way as they all affect each other and are undeniably linked (Swiderska 2020).

Indigenous groups created environmentalism, and there are many groups doing good currently to help fight the climate crisis. The Swinomish are well known for being one of the first communities to make climate adaptation a thing. They recently revived the idea of building the first modern clam garden in the United States. The project would help boost clam numbers as well as provide additional food sources as other species decline. This is one way in which they plan to help their community as they are feeling the effects of climate change. Other than clam gardens, they also work to protect salmon runs, attempting to create better spawning beds and planting trees to lower river temperatures. The Swinomish are just one example of Indigenous groups fighting climate change. Several groups throughout the United States have come forward to promote their ideas on how the climate crisis should be handled. The Karuk tribe came forth to promote their ideas and recommended that in order to prevent wildfires of the severity we had seen before, we should return to prescribed burning throughout California. Another tribe known as the Tulalip tribe has relocated beavers throughout urban areas of Washington in order to lower river temperatures and increase salmon populations (Jones 2020). There are countless other groups working in their areas to help the environment, yet they received little acknowledgment from environmental organizations. Indigenous tribes have been adapting to climate change for years now and continue to do so, just at a much quicker pace as our situation worsens.

Similarly to the explanation of Skywoman Falling, Indigenous groups also consider the future of their tribes and family when thinking about the climate crisis. A large portion of the United States views the climate crisis as not being a problem because they will not be around when we begin to experience the effects of climate change fully. Indigenous groups are working

to preserve these lands and wildlife for the future generations of their tribes. They can think many generations ahead when deciding how to use their resources, whereas the majority of Americans do not think more than a few months ahead.

Indigenous groups are by far the most knowledgeable in regard to the climate crisis and conservation. Their teachings have shown them the proper ways to care for the environment and have a positive impact on the ecosystems around them. Their ways of thinking are the most accurate and correct way to view the climate crisis. Their ways are both optimistic and realistic. They acknowledge the harm caused by the United States government and also are able to provide solutions. As time goes on, these people have come to feel the effects of climate change, encouraging them to continue these philosophies in a more rapid way(Jones 2020).

### **Chapter 5: Solutions for the Future**

At our current rate, we are putting the Earth and all of humanity in a very uncomfortable position. The climate crisis continues to worsen, and despite the changes we have seen being made, it appears that it is still far from behind us. There is so much that must be done in order to slow the process of climate change and attempt to reverse the damage that has already been done. Using the teachings of the Anishinaabe tribe, there are several steps to spread these ideas in order to help combat climate change.

*Education.* Anishinaabe teachings are passed down throughout generations and are often taught to young children. The youth are the future and are the ones that will eventually be most affected by the climate crisis if we continue at this rate. Bringing climate-related education into schools is absolutely necessary to combat climate change. Allowing children to learn about the severity of the climate crisis would affect how more people view it, as many would receive very different information than what they would learn from their parents. Incorporating these ideas



from the Anishinaabe tribe into education would allow more people to understand the importance and value of the other living things around them. Learning about a group of people that value the Earth so much may be able to keep young generations and encourage them to keep working and fighting for a solution. Learning of these philosophies may also influence how they view the environment as a whole.

Education, in particular, is a difficult subject within the United States. Regardless of this difficulty, implementing climate education is absolutely essential to making progress. The things children learn have a large impact on the next generation. Older generations were not taught of these issues and the harm they could cause to the environment. Many of them were shown to prioritize success which led to our current problem of prioritizing profit over the planet. This way of thinking has put my generation at a disadvantage as we will suffer the consequences of other generations' actions. Although younger generations are ones that learned more about the climate crisis, it was not nearly enough. The upcoming generation must be taught about how voting for the proper candidates and holding large corporations accountable are the best ways to combat the climate crisis.

The greatest solution we can resort to would be an increase in climate education. Although in richer countries, the majority of the population may have some kind of knowledge of the climate crisis, it is clear how lacking we are with real education sources to properly inform people about what is happening. In the United States, only two of the fifty states require an earth science or environmental science course to graduate high school. A 2018 study also showed that roughly 80% of high school students have inadequate knowledge of environmental education. Most students were found to be lacking in subjects including environmental conservation, environmental ethics, natural resource management, or an explanation of how we have reached

our current environmental issues. There is a dire need for proper education on environmental issues(EarthShare 2022).

Education is a difficult topic in the United States when it comes to educating young children on issues that are current topics in political discussions, such as environmental issues. This can be seen as pushing certain political agendas. Instating proper climate education into the United States education system requires proper educators to be involved. Having the right curriculum will not be enough if the teachers are not properly trained and well-equipped to teach the subject. When it comes to proper climate education, it is important for teachers to include environmental justice in this.

General knowledge, along with those of the Anishinaabe, showing kids the importance of balance in the environment and how we all rely on each other, would create the proper education for students to learn of the climate crisis but also give them hope and the ability to make change. In order to teach Anishinaabe principles, it would need to be done with the permission of the tribes as well as done by a member themselves. It is important that this is done in the most respectful manner and not in a way to harm the culture behind the teachings. It is also important for environmental education to include environmental justice. There is no use in Anishinaabe teachings if we do not push education to include the stories of the hardships encountered by people of color and other minority groups. More often than not, people do not associate human rights with being a part of environmental issues. Indigenous teachings cannot be taught without the acknowledgment and explanation of environmental injustices to Indigenous communities, along with communities containing people of color or a large population of lower-income families.

All of those who care about the environment should work to understand the philosophies of the Anishinaabe tribe. Education, as I had mentioned earlier, will not reach everyone. But by making these ideas more well known through the rise of Indigenous political leaders, more people may find themselves actively working to harm the environment less. Small things that we do not often consider to be of concern may now have a new meaning to them, allowing us to understand how much harm is actually being done every single day. I am not saying that large corporations should be going out and asking the Earth for use, but rather that these ideas should be something that we use to help us understand how the planet is being harmed. Valuing plants and animals at an almost human level would allow more people to understand their importance and how they are beings deserving of life. If more people learned of this way of thinking, we would have more people joining the side to combat the climate crisis and fewer issues than we do now. With this mentality growing, there would be a major change in the way people vote. If more people understood the selfishness that comes with the mentality so many of us currently have, they would see the absolute disregard for the environment from most political leaders and large companies.

*Indigenous Representation.* Making Indigenous people more involved in the environmental movement is absolutely necessary. It would be unethical to use their ideas and not have them involved in the movement. Since they were the original environmentalists, they deserve to have a place in the movement where their voices can be heard. There are very few groups who value the environment as much as they do. It is important to note that they are also some of the most affected by the climate crisis. Besides stealing their ideas, it would also be unethical to have the movement run by well-off white people because they are the least affected by it. And as we have seen, people of color are the most affected by the climate crisis, including

many Native tribes. It would be unfair for these groups to be doing the most for the movement yet have the least amount of representation in the movement. Without the work of Indigenous tribes, the Earth would suffer even more than it already is. Although the issues surrounding Standing Rock may seem as though they only pertain to human rights, issues with the Dakota Access Pipeline would not only destroy the drinking water of the tribe but also negatively affect the environment surrounding them.

Without eliminating barriers to Indigenous people in politics, we cannot expect any of these other solutions to come forward. The right of Indigenous people to participate in political life is protected under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Despite this, Indigenous people continue to face barriers when it comes to their inclusion in our current political system. This is not just an issue that affects Indigenous people attempting to run for political office but the general population when it comes to voting. One sector in which Indigenous youth are involved, in particular, is issues surrounding climate change.

According to 2020 U.S. Census data and the research of Advance Native Political Leadership, Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian peoples make up about 0.03% of elected officials, an incredibly small percentage of political leaders. Those who are elected officials can be seen making huge changes with their influence. Deb Halaand, United States Secretary of the Interior, has done quite a bit of climate work during her time in politics. In 2021, Halaand issued two Secretarial orders to prioritize climate change action. They were able to establish a Climate Task Force, used in “accelerating renewable energy development and identifying actions to foster investments in energy communities”(U.S. Department of the Interior 2021). “The Order additionally provides policy instruction to ensure that the level of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis across DOI bureaus is not diminished, that climate

change is appropriately analyzed, and that Tribes and environmental justice communities are appropriately engaged”(U.S. Department of the Interior 2021).

There are many ways in which nonprofits and non-governmental organizations can be more inclusive to Indigenous people. To start, these organizations can attempt to work with Indigenous-led organizations. This allows them to gain the perspective of Indigenous people as well as promote their organizations. They can also invest in Indigenous-run organizations. As environmental organizations already lack funding, it is clear that those run by Indigenous groups seriously lack funding. Finally, they can work to understand the ideas and philosophies of Indigenous groups within the area they are working in. Indigenous philosophies can be very insightful in relation to the climate crisis and can be a true help to the work they are attempting to do. Including them in the movement is absolutely vital to advancing our current work on climate and environmental justice (Foxworth 2020).

We must begin to acknowledge Indigenous fights as our own. Indigenous people fight against problems that greatly affect all of us. Deforestation, environmental degradation, and climate change are all issues that severely affect us in one way or another, and yet Indigenous groups are the primary ones fighting against these issues. Around the world, Indigenous people are at the frontlines of this fight, putting their lives at risk to create change. We all benefit from their fighting. It is all of our responsibility to fight against the climate crisis. The United Nations Environmental Programme points out how the majority of these stories on Indigenous people fighting for progress in regard to the climate crisis only receive publicity when someone is martyred. There is an unfortunate link between Indigenous leaders fighting for climate justice and their being killed or murdered (UN Environment Programme 2019). It is important to note how much of the Earth’s land that Indigenous people take care of. They care for over a quarter of

the world's land surface. This would make sense as to why so much of our biodiversity exists on their land and why the preservation of their cultures is directly linked to the preservation of the environment. Despite their love for the environment, we cannot assume that this care is easy for each Indigenous group. As explained above, there is a long history of murders and killings of climate activists. The work they are doing can be incredibly dangerous (UN Environment Programme 2019).

Wildlife protection is also vital to preserving Indigenous culture and people. A large portion of the earth's biodiversity is found on Indigenous lands. We can also see a vast difference in the protection of wildlife on Indigenous lands than on lands that Indigenous people do not hold. In areas managed by Indigenous people, biodiversity is declining at a significantly slower rate than everywhere else. These ideas and practices held by Indigenous groups are the reason for this. Combining Indigenous ideas depending on the area and what tribe is near the area, with proper funding, could allow for huge improvements in biodiversity loss across the country. Especially when it comes to native wildlife, Indigenous groups are more likely to be more knowledgeable about the care and protection of each species found in the area.

*Changing the Narrative.* We must find a different way to discuss the climate crisis. The current ways we talk about the climate crisis are unsustainable. It fluctuates between those on the right claiming that there is nothing for the population to worry about and those on the left exclaiming how we are doomed, and there is nothing we can do to reverse the damage that has occurred. Both of these ways of thinking are useless as they discourage action. One completely discourages action as it encourages people to continue on the way they have been living, allowing no change to occur. In fact, many of those who claim to think like this actively encourage more harm to occur, as we saw under the Trump Administration (Popovich et al.

2021). On the other hand, proclaiming this doom and gloom attitude allows people to give up.

When people think that there is nothing that can be done and that they are basically on the verge of human extinction, they will never feel that anything they do is enough to help. The teachings of the Anishinaabe tribe are the perfect example of a middle ground for people to follow. They are able to emphasize the importance of actively trying to fight the climate crisis without finding this sense of hopelessness. Their ideas and methods still have this flare of positivity to them that learning from them makes you want to work harder and do your best to create change. If more people were able to follow along with these ideas, then there would be less controversy and more action being taken to try and solve these issues. When people fall into this sense of hopelessness, they lose track of the things that still must be done. As more people fall into that, there are fewer people to advocate for Indigenous rights in the environmental movement and to fight against the climate crisis as a whole.

*Indigenous Managed Land.* Being that they are typically more knowledgeable of the local wildlife and needs of the ecosystem, they are more likely to be successful in management. According to the NRDC, Indigenous peoples have been leading the protection and restoration of carbon-rich and biodiverse ecosystems. “Through Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and a growing Indigenous Guardians Network that employs Indigenous experts to serve as the “eyes and ears” across their traditional territories, Indigenous communities, and leaders are centering their knowledge, laws, and traditions in land management and stewardship to safeguard climate-critical places like the boreal forest” (Stefani 2021). The AR5 Synthesis Report explains the different kinds of adaptation pathways, using Indigenous as one. Indigenous, local, and traditional knowledge systems are a resource that can be used for adapting to climate change,

but, unfortunately, have not been used consistently (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2015, 19).

Indigenous-managed lands do much better than those not managed by Indigenous people. As more lands are beginning to be returned to Indigenous groups, we are seeing a vast difference in biodiversity loss. The use of Traditional Ecological Knowledge has been increasingly seen by conservationists as a way to manage nature in a way that works against climate change. With this change, we have also seen conservation organizations work towards this. The Nature Conservancy has since institutionalized the transfer of ecologically important land with the use of its Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Program. There is advocacy for healing the relationship between humans and land in relation to Indigenous ideas. In some communities, we can see these changes being very beneficial to the environment. One example of this would be the use of fire in wildlife and ecosystem management. Using fires can increase ecological resilience to grow certain species that are vital for the community. Regardless of the positive outcomes we see when allocating control of the land to Indigenous people, the land was rightfully once theirs. This moves into the subject of environmental justice as the United States historically stole the lands of Indigenous tribes (Robbins 2021).

It is important to understand why we need these ideas. With the way we are currently going, we are not working fast enough to solve this. Some people are not understanding the severity of the situation we are currently in, while others have almost given up because of the severity of the issues. Regardless of what solutions we attempt over the next few years, the important part of all of them is that they include the ideas of the Anishinaabe tribe. We can learn from Indigenous communities, more specifically the Anishinaabe tribe, how to value the planet. We can only properly learn from them and their philosophies. The leaders of this tribe should be



at the forefront of the movement as they are the most knowledgeable. They are the most affected by the climate crisis issues, yet are some of the most environmentally conscious people. There are so many reasons why they should be the ones leading the environmental movement and why their philosophies are the ones necessary to heal the damage already caused. As long as there is prioritization to these ideas, we can make a huge impact on the environment to combat the climate crisis.

There are so many changes to be made in order to truly see a difference in our country. It will be a long and difficult process, but it is absolutely necessary in order to slow the effects of the climate crisis that we are currently facing. Although some of these solutions may sound challenging due to the current government we have, there are still possibilities that can come from these suggestions. It is unrealistic to expect all of these changes to occur immediately, but there are many achievable steps we can take to preserve Indigenous communities, promote Indigenous peoples in politics, and prioritize their methods to combat the effects of the climate crisis. There is a dire need to prioritize and amplify the voices of Indigenous people.

Acknowledging our harmful past can allow us to make serious changes in supporting Indigenous leaders and their plans to restore the environment. Their voices are absolutely vital to the preservation of our water systems, wildlife biodiversity, and overall, our health and the health of our planet.

I would not say any of these solutions are the most viable, but the most important thing is awareness. Unfortunately, ideas surrounding environmental justice and racism, especially in relation to Indigenous peoples, are not well known. This is partially due to how the United States tried to cover up the horrible history of the abuse towards Indigenous peoples. The protection of Indigenous people is the protection of wildlife. There is so much work that needs to be done, but

it is important for people to understand the history of Indigenous environmental injustices as well as their philosophies in relation to the environment to fully understand their relationship to the environmental movement.

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