

## Sustainability in FNS 226 Introduction to First Nations Studies: First Nations Social Justice

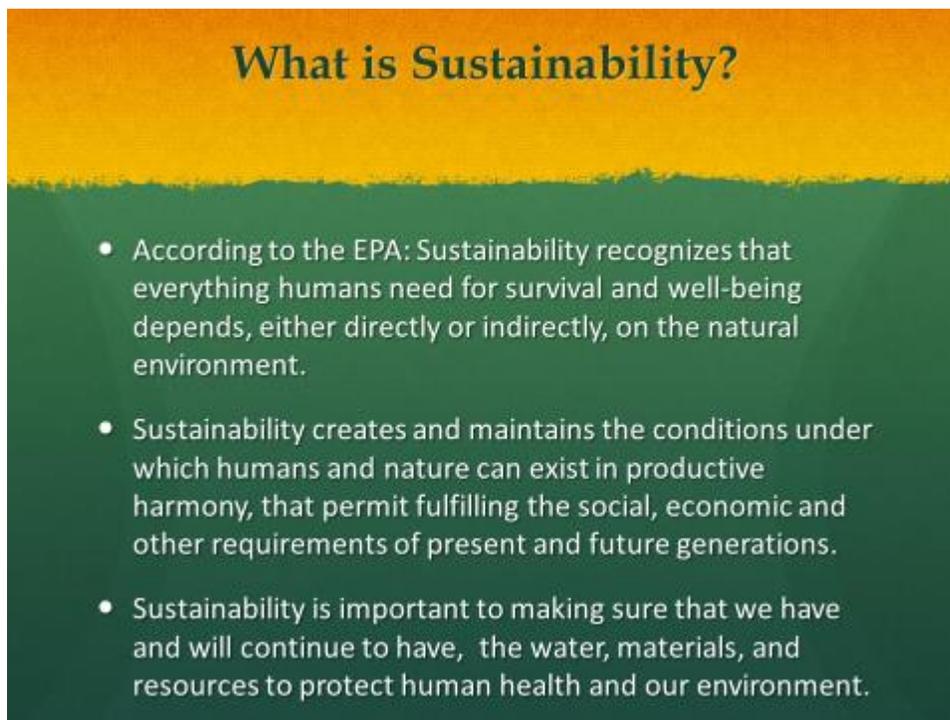
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**Plan:** In the spring of 2016, I implemented three new course learning outcomes related to First Nations sustainability. This was implemented in FNS 226. The course is a general education course (ethnic studies and sustainability). Each of outcomes fall under the category of Indigenous Philosophy. They are as follows:

- Students will think critically about First Nations views of the Earth and natural world.
- Students will apply First Nations view of the Earth and natural world to contemporary understandings of sustainability.
- Students will demonstrate how First Nations world views create a more sustainable world.

In one section of FNS 226 (the online version), one additional reading was added to the course. This reading is “The Ways of Knowing Guide: Earth’s Teachings” available electronically for free at <http://www.torontozoo.com/pdfs/tic/ways-of-knowing.pdf>. In the face to face version of FNS 226, students received additional instruction about sustainability and watched a video clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5NiTN0chj0>. The following Powerpoint slides were used in class.



In addition, students were required to work in their small groups to accomplish a group task related to sustainability. Here they had to compare the EPA definition of sustainability to a broader view.

# Sustainability: Application Group Task

- Consider all you have read and learned in the course so far. How might First Nations traditionally define “sustainability?”
- How would this definition be the same as the definitions from EPA in 2015 and the video clip?
- How would this definition be different than the definitions from the EPA and the video clip?

**Evaluation:** The learning outcomes were evaluated in the midterm exam. For the midterm exam, students worked in their small groups to create an online blog. The blog topic was “How Can Traditional First Nations World Views Create a More Sustainable World?” The exam instructions are attached to this document.

All students were very successful in meeting the three new outcomes related to sustainability. In fact, the midterm exams exceeded my expectations.

The following are links to the midterm blogs submitted by two of the seven groups in class:

<http://imagineindigenous.edublogs.org/>

<http://jonemm15.edublogs.org/>

In addition, something unexpected and surprising happened with the final exam. Given that there was an emphasis on sustainability earlier in the course, all seven student groups incorporated environmental issues and sustainability into their final exam poster projects. This occurred even though the final exam was NOT directly about environmental these issues. The final exam required student groups to demonstrate their understanding of First Nations Tribal Sovereignty. The majority of the student groups felt that environmental issues were central to First Nations Tribal Sovereignty and sustainability. This result further demonstrated that students applied their learning from the first half of the course to issues of sovereignty. The following are some photographic examples of the final exam poster boards relating sovereignty to sustainability and environmental issues on tribal land.



In the above poster, the student group used a drawing to demonstrate that tribal sovereignty is related to the creation beliefs of First Nations people. Here the students drew Oneida origin of Turtle Island (North America).

***How First Nations Sovereignty is beneficial to nature & the economy!***

**Fish hatcheries**

First Nations people have their own fish hatcheries that help to replenish the lakes and rivers. So even though they are able to spear fish, they are giving back about as many, if not more, fish than they are taking. *(Please see spear fishing MYTH!)*

**Land preservation**

-Prevention of taconite mines

The First Nations people have diligently worked to prevent large mining companies from coming into areas and desecrating the land. This keeps our land and water resources safe, fresh, healthy, and plentiful for our future generations.



## ENVIRONMENT

Tribal sovereignty has also been a big part of environmental activism for years. Most recently, the Bad River tribe fought a proposed mine that would have stretched for over twenty miles south of the reservation. While mine supporters said that jobs would be brought to the area, others pointed out that the mine would bring in its own people from outside the community and would get in the way of any tourism that would support the area. In addition to harming the local tourism economy, the toxic runoff would seep into the underground aquifers, affecting the drinking water in wells, and would run into rivers flowing north into Lake Superior. This watershed runs directly through the Bad River reservation, and so the tribe banded together with other community members to fight the proposed mine. In this instance, the tribe used their existing tribal sovereignty for the community as a whole. By using tribal sovereignty, they succeeded in preventing the mine from going in and preserved the environment on their reservation and for the surrounding community.

**Menominee forestry, Poupert fish hatchery**  
Tribal sovereignty is of paramount importance when considering ways to preserve and heal the environment. For example, traditional forestry practices on the Menominee reservation are held up as examples of how to work with the forest for resources and as an alternative to clear-cutting for lumber resources. In fact, their methods are so successful that when viewed from space, the Menominee reservation looks like a green rectangle in a sea of lighter-green. Without tribal sovereignty, we would not have these practices or be able to study and learn the impact they could have if adopted on a larger scale. Another example is the Poupert Fish Hatchery. The hatchery is owned and run by the Lac du Flambeau Anishnaabe and raises trout, walleye, muskie, sturgeon, and suckers. It stocks both on- and off-reservation lakes and rivers and has been a major contributor to the