

**Date**

13 May 2020

**To**

Graduate Women New Zealand

**From**

Lottie Boardman

**Progress Report from 2019 GWNZ Fellowship Recipient**

I am writing to you to express my gratitude for being awarded a 2019 GWNZ Fellowship and to update you on the progress of my studies. At the time of writing, I am in the final stages of my three years of study at Yale University. Later this year, I expect to graduate with a joint Master of Environmental Management (from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies) and a Master of Arts in Global Affairs (from Yale's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs). I was based in New Haven, Connecticut until March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in Yale closing campus and shifting its classes online. Since then, I have been attending classes via Zoom (including getting up for 5am classes twice a week!) from my hometown of Christchurch. While it is great to be at home with my family, I am sad to have left the US so suddenly and without being able to say goodbye to most of the people who made my time at Yale so enriching.

Consistent with my intentions at the time of applying for a GWNZ Fellowship, I have focused my studies at Yale on the broad and intertwined issues of sustainable food systems, international trade and climate change. While I have been privileged to take courses in a range of areas including environmental and international economics, the global financial system, intellectual history, statistics and environmental writing, I particularly enjoyed my forays into environmental and economic anthropology and political ecology – disciplines that I was first introduced to at Yale. These courses trained me to think critically about our ideas about “nature” and the “environment” and the relationship between the natural and social worlds.

My course assignments allowed me opportunities to apply what I was learning to a New Zealand, or sometimes Australian, context. During my time at Yale, I wrote papers on (among other things) mānuka honey and its relationship to New Zealand's colonial history, the possibility of New Zealand farmers taking up the idea of “food sovereignty”, Aboriginal water rights in Western Australia, farming in the Mackenzie Basin, and on the discourse around fossil fuel subsidy reform (a cause that New Zealand advocates for internationally), as well as a comparison of New Zealand's Zero Carbon Act and the potential Green New Deal in the US and a preliminary investigation into the relationships between climate change, Aboriginal rights and energy development in Australia's Northern Territory. My last few assignments include a paper on meat consumption in New Zealand in the context of colonisation and climate change (for a class on the anthropology of human-animal relations) and a paper examining Norway's climate change rhetoric in the context of its economic reliance on its oil industry. In addition to my focus on social and environmental systems, I spent four semesters studying Spanish as part of my Global Affairs degree. This gave me an appreciation for the language but also for the depth of my ignorance (somewhat ameliorated through my studies!) of Spanish and Latin American history.

Both my degree programs had a summer research or internship requirement. During my first (Northern Hemisphere) summer, inspired by my studies in environmental anthropology, I undertook a research project investigating the politics of knowledge in New Zealand's mānuka honey industry, with a particular focus on the knowledge and perspectives of Māori involved in the industry. This project was my first experience of the humbling endeavour that is qualitative social science research. This involved going through two different research ethics processes (interesting in themselves!) and then attending a symposium, the National Apiculture Conference and a Māori bee club meeting, as well as, most importantly, having the privilege of interviewing a number of Māori about their involvement in the industry. Through these experiences, I came to understand mānuka honey as a lens on New Zealand's colonial past and present as well as future decolonial possibilities. I am thankful to have been mentored in my research by both my professors at Yale and some very generous researchers at Manaaki Whenua-Landcare Research.

My second summer I spent in Darwin in Australia's Northern Territory, interning at a community-based environmental NGO. During my time in Darwin, I researched potential reforms of the Territory's mine rehabilitation legislation, assisted with a submission on the Northern Territory's proposed environmental reform legislation, appeared with my supervisor before the relevant Committee of the Territory's Legislative Assembly to answer questions about that submission, and prepared a presentation on the environmental effects of the military on the Territory. I enjoyed being able to use my legal skills again as well as consolidate what I had been learning at Yale about the thoroughly social and political nature of environmental action.

In and beyond the classroom, I have had the privilege of meeting and getting to know people from around the world and across the US. Through talking to my friends and being able to visit some of their homes, I was able to learn from their diverse experiences and share my love for and knowledge of New Zealand. Yale also provided a wide variety of opportunities beyond my classes. Some highlights include observing a United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York on the topic of the rights of Indigenous Peoples (as part of Yale's inaugural United Nations and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Program), having the opportunity to hear some of my favourite authors (Rebecca Solnit, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and anthropologists Anna Tsing and Hannah Appel) speak at Yale, and participating in the Yale Climate Strike. Other opportunities included being involved in student government at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, participating in an Indonesian Gamelan music group and forming a running group with my classmates and friends.

After completing my studies at Yale in the not-too-distant future, I hope to use the invaluable skills, knowledge and experiences I've gained over the last few years to contribute to the intertwined struggles for climate action, decolonisation and social justice. In the short term, I hope to contribute to these efforts through working for central or local government in a policy role or an advocacy role with an environmental NGO. In the medium term, I am considering undertaking a PhD in environmental anthropology so as to be able to continue the lifelong process of thinking differently about the environment and our relationships with it and to be equipped to teach others to do the same.

Yours faithfully,

Lottie Boardman



Visiting the field site of one of my roommates (a pond in Yale Myers Forests) (May 2019).



Visiting the United Nations General Assembly in New York City as part of Yale's inaugural United Nations and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Program (October 2019).



Visiting with a wallaby at the Territory Wildlife Park in the Northern Territory of Australia (June 2019).



Presenting to my Global Affairs classmates on my mānuka honey research (December 2019).



Attending the European Climate Change Adaptation Conference in Belém, Portugal, with my good friend and classmate Nat (May 2019).



Preparing to attend a climate action rally with my environmental school classmates (September 2018).



Fall apple picking with some of my Global Affairs classmates (October 2019).