

Kenneth Coward Award Winner–  
Ro’anna Tudela

2020 Department of Public Lands Scholarship Essay Contest

**Essay Prompt- “Why is it important to preserve public lands in the CNMI?”**

The CNMI is known for its profound natural beauty and culture. With the indigenous people still residing in the islands today, we possess the privilege to proudly showcase and represent our home to individuals all around the world. Despite being a small group of islands, we are no stranger to modernization and development. To preserve public lands in the CNMI is to preserve the natural beauty, culture, and to provide the future generations of indigenous people with the same opportunities and pride in the islands that we have today.

The CNMI is home to the most breathtaking mountain views and beautiful sandy beaches. Its primary economy is tourism as a result of this attribute. Preserving these parts of the CNMI maintains the natural beauty of the islands, attracting a plethora of tourists from all around the world. This also leaves opportunity to the indigenous people to enlighten new people from different places about who we are here in the CNMI. In addition, the residents of the islands too enjoy and savor the virtue of our islands’ nature, in great anticipation to provide their offspring with the same experience and appreciation for our islands’ beauty as they had.

History and culture are especially important here in the CNMI. With the event of World War II, there are masses of evidence still present on the islands till this day. A historical event with an importance as enormous as this one, we strive to preserve the authenticity as it provides everyone with a direct experience of this phenomenon. We are also extremely favored that the traditional latte stones used to build houses in ancient times are still existent and protected today at the House of Taga in Tinian, and the Taga Latte House Quarry in Rota. The preservations of these lands are crucial to who the indigenous people are. The captivating latte stone is embedded in our culture, and we are immensely fortunate and proud that we are able to appreciate them directly.

With the admirable beaches and rich culture, it is important that we preserve them for the generations to come. We desire that our future leaders will guide us in knowing who our ancestors were, and having an intimate connection to the history of their home. This will give them the humility and pride to carry out what is best for the people of the CNMI. We also want to give them the opportunity to relish in the most natural state of the islands that we can possibly give them by preserving it.

The preservation of public lands is significant to the previous, current, and future generations of the CNMI. The history, culture, and economy are dependent on this conservation to maintain the trueness of our home. It is critical that we educate others on the importance of our heritage, so that they will also be able to understand why it is important to our people. We must aspire to sustain the authenticity and natural beauty of the islands we call home.