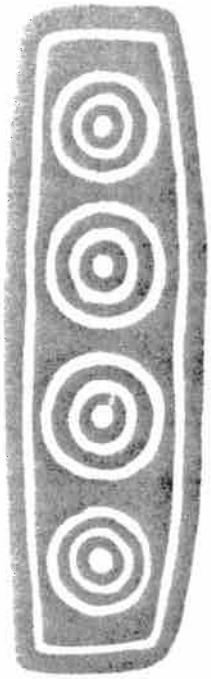
[PARADIGM WARS]

Indigenous Peoples' Resistance to Economic Globalization



A Special Report of the
INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON GLOBALIZATION
COMMITTEE ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

EDITORS
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CHAPTER 3

Aspects of Traditional Knowledge and World View

Following are four excerpts that reveal fundamental issues putting traditional/native worldviews into conflict with the dominant global economic model. The first two authors are the well-known Indian activists and thinkers Winona LaDuke (Anishinaabe) who directs the White Earth Land Recovery Project in Minnesota, and John Mohawk (Seneca) who directs the American Studies Program at the University of Buffalo. The statements from each of them are excerpted from talks they gave at the International Forum on Globalization's Indigenous Peoples' and Globalization seminar, July 2001. The third comment on "holy land" is from a speech by Native American psychologist Leslie Gray of Woodfish Institute, at Bioneers 2003 in San Rafael, California.

The fourth set of excerpts are from the late Oxford University anthropologist Darrell Posey, taken from his article "Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity" published by the United Nations Environment Program, 1999.

The People Belong to the Land

Winona LaDuke
(Anishinaabe)
White Earth Land Recovery Project

THE TEACHINGS OF OUR PEOPLE concerning our relationships to the land are deeply embedded in our language. For instance, in Ojibway, *"nishnabe akin"* means "the land to which the people belong." This implies an entirely separate paradigm about property rights from that contained in discussions which are held in the U.S. courts. *"Nishnabe akin"* doesn't mean "the allotment to which the people belong," nor does it mean "the land that belongs to the people." It means that we belong to the land. This concept is accompanied by many teachings, one of which is that our relationship to the land is just that—a relationship. Not a bargaining of rights versus responsibilities. In a relationship with the land, responsibilities are already implicit.

Another phrase which we hear quite a bit in our language is *"dinawaymaaganinaadog"* which means "all our relatives"—not just those with two legs, but those with four legs, or wings, or fins. Our teachings are filled with stories about *"dinawaymaaganinaadog,"* such as how the bears taught us medicine, or how the wolves taught us child-rearing.

We also have many teachings about trees, and our communities are known for our excellent birch bark canoes and houses. But the recent decline of birch trees in our area may be attributed to the neglect of our teachings and the neglect of our relationship with those trees. Instead of respectfully managing the gifts of the birch, we have come to prefer plastic, throwing off the relation-

ship between the people and "all our relatives." Again, the concept of "relationship" is not only central to our philosophy in the broadest sense, but absolutely crucial to the health of our immediate environment.

So you see, our language, our teachings, and our cultural practices are one. This is why it is paramount in our communities to ensure the vitality of our languages, and to ensure the viability of our cultural teachings that are imparted by those languages. Without our languages, we are simply wandering—philosophically, spiritually, economically. To preserve our languages we need to protect our lands and our historic practices.

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When you discuss "property rights" of our communities you must point out how our traditional land tenure system, particularly our traditional collective ownership, has been seriously infringed upon. Today, in GATT or the WTO or these other trade agreements, we see the culmination of hundreds of years of imposition of alien concepts about land ownership. As far back as the time of the papal bulls in the fifteenth century, the edicts from the Pope proclaimed that only Christians could own land. This essentially became the mandate for colonialism, the "Manifest Destiny" argument for the righteousness of Christians over all other peoples. It made a vast and historic impact from which we have never recovered. To this day, we are fighting in courts that remain prejudiced against non-Christians, courts created by papal law.

Whereas colonization favored the Christian god, today's globalization model favors the gods of money and technology. It is a logic equally distant from reality, brutally imposed by one group of self-proclaimed monarchs. This time, they're not Christian; they're just rich. But the tyranny is the same.

The logic of the global market has justified innumerable violations against our and every other community, whether it be land tenure issues and the allotment processes or deforestation by Weyerhauser, or the destruction of the buffalo herd or the diversion of water affecting our wild rice. But yet, in spite of that, we retain an immense and viable subsistence economy. We are able to feed ourselves, because our ecosystem and our relatives have been somehow able to adapt. Our reservation in northern Minnesota is still populated with all the creatures which were there before, minus the buffalo and the sturgeon. Fortunately, we're now seeing the sturgeon recover, and we're working on the buffalo. That's a pretty good testament to the resilience of an ecosystem. So that has been the work that we have undertaken in the last fifteen years in our community—how do we restore and strengthen all that in the face of these broader impacts? And how do we increase and generate local wealth, whether that is the wealth of subsistence—just making sure that you can feed yourself—or it's the wealth that comes from the cash economy, which is now so very dominant.

The opposing paradigms—money/market/technology versus subsistence—are expressing themselves on many levels. Most apparent is our fight against globalization's relentless pressure to clearcut our forest lands for exports; straight out of the tradition of the papal bulls.

The conflict between the two paradigms pervades to less obvious aspects of life as well. Today, we grapple with these issues, particularly in terms of a couple of things which we produce for our larger economy. Our organization, White Earth Land Recovery Project, produces wild rice and maple syrup, raspberries, strawberries, hominy corn and some other products. We produce it for both local food and sustenance and also the surplus for sale. The issues that we face today, the impacts of globalization and the impacts of new technologies, for instance, in production of maple syrup—raise the question of how we keep our trees standing rather than cut down by clearcutting. And there's the issue of technological choice. Increasingly, maple syrup producers are using PVC pipes and pumps to suction sap

out of trees at a higher level of production, without the need of human labor. But we have teachings about maple syrup. They tell the story of how, long ago, pure maple syrup—as opposed to the sap—came out of the trees. But we got lazy; in trying to save labor, we experimented with a technique that backfired, causing the trees to no longer produce syrup. Now, all the trees produce only sap, and forty gallons of sap produce only one gallon of syrup, for only part of the year. Our teachings direct us to examine the hidden price of labor-saving shortcuts, which is why we choose to avoid them. Who knows, they may backfire so that it might take a hundred gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup! True, collecting sap by hand is economically inefficient in the eyes of the market, and yes, it is impossible to compete with certified-organic producers who use PVC pipes, which produce 30 percent more sap. But what are the long-term costs? How will these PVC producers fare in thirty or forty years, sucking those great quantities out of the trees, year after year? The money/market/technology paradigm never relates to such questions.

Perhaps the essence of the conflict between the two paradigms is captured in the treatment of rice. Wild rice is at the core of our being. The Creator gave us wild rice—incredibly, a different variety for nearly every lake on our lands—as part of our original instructions. These instructions teach us how to live sustainably, in an intricate relationship with all living things. Currently, the University of Minnesota is studying the genome of the rice for "lessons" of their own, although we have never asked them to do so. The University of Minnesota has screwed around with the rice crop for thirty years now, successfully making paddy rice which is now grown in California at far higher levels of production than in our area. Three quarters of the rice crop comes from California, and I happen to know that Uncle Ben's did not get that rice from the Creator. Uncle Ben just went out there and decided. They're now renewing their interest in messing with the rice crop. They're talking about genetic manipulation. Our communities are concerned about the impact on the wild crops of their genetic manipulation; if it will affect them, if their varieties will somehow overshadow our varieties, which are very biologically diverse. This is a huge issue in our community, and it has very much to do with these issues of globalization. The idea of tampering with this wild crop, so sacred, unique and central to our culture, has inflamed even the most conservative institutions in our communities. It has brought concern to all of the people in our community. Questions about genetic manipulation and patenting express the essence of the conflict between those two paradigms. The respect for all life and creation versus the university's and corporations' rights to "legally" own and commercialize and globalize that creation. But this is the nature of the globalization model—its self-proclaimed royalty over all peoples in the service of money and technology.

For us, rice is a source of food and also wisdom. For the globalizers, it is just a commodity to be exploited for profit. The paradigms are at loggerheads.

So that is the struggle in our community. The dialogue that I am interested in is the dialogue within our communities about which direction we're going to go, as well as the dialogue about how to bring our voice to the broader communities. That philosophical and spiritual and cultural dialogue needs to be deepened in our own communities, because it's in our hands to determine the future.

Subsistence and Materialism

John Mohawk
(Seneca)
University of Buffalo

INDIGENOUS OR NATIVE PEOPLE bring a very unique argument to the world stage. They don't have armies or navies, they don't have national currencies, they don't have any of the attributes that Western nations think make up nationhood.

And yet they propose that their continued existence is a moral imperative; that they have a moral right to continue to live as a distinct community and in the manner they have for millennia. They aren't asking for a military, they don't want a currency or international trade agreements. All they are asking for is to be able to maintain the life they have been living in the environment they found, where they became conscious of themselves as Peoples and Nations. But today, we are up against vastly different worldviews.

Let me illustrate with this example. Let's say you have three people who approach a tree. One's a *socialist* materialist, one's a *capitalist* materialist and one's a traditional native person. The capitalist materialist will explain to you that he has to cut the tree down because this is in the best interest, not only of himself but also of society–that it is a kind of destiny–that by cutting the tree down, he will rationally distribute the materials from the tree and he'll do the most good for the poorest people that way. A socialist person approaching the tree will also tell you to cut the tree down, because after cutting the tree down you can distribute it equally to everybody and it's going to do the most good for the world that way. But a native person looking at the tree will say that the tree, in it's unharmed, original form, has a value that's greater than anything the others are proposing be done with it. So far, unfortunately, the materialist-destiny-capitalist argument has prevailed.

For the last 180 years we have confronted such fundamental conflicting arguments every day except we haven't been taught to categorize them. The materialist arguments are the ones that now clearly dominate the university, but there's been an underlying, pervasive argument around destiny that we haven't really talked much about in the West. In the 19th century, however, the colonization of the West was spoken about as a destiny: Manifest Destiny. On the basis of that destiny, it was okay to go in and steal people's resources; okay to steal their waters; okay to kill them; okay to move them; okay to do whatever had to be done in order to achieve the destiny. You can justify anything when you think you are acting on the part of destiny and believe you have the capacity to create utopia. The Christians who marched on Jerusalem had such a plan. So did the Nazis who marched on Europe and we saw it again in Serbia and lately in Iraq. Almost everywhere, you can find people displacing people, seizing people's resources, even abusing or murdering people in the name of some sort of mandate of state, religious destiny or utopian vision.

What has opposed that, historically, have been arguments around *morality*: Does a People have a right to come and steal other people's things, destroy their culture, steal their children, ruin their languages, do all these other things? Do they have a right to do that? These acts are justified in the name of predicted benefits from capitalist intervention, but that argument is shortsighted. For example, a recent *New York Times* article quoted U.S. government officials saying that by denying the people in Africa the right to genetically modified foods (GMOs) that we're essentially harming them. We're harming them, mind you–they didn't complain that they're being harmed; in fact, most African nations are refusing GMO foods. Really, it's the people who want to sell them the biologically modified foods who are providing them with the idea that they are being harmed. And of course this has been the other argument—the argument among even the liberal people in the North that indigenous peoples shouldn't be allowed to maintain themselves and their cultures as they exist now; to do so denies them the access to such wonderful Western inventions as television and video games and all these technological things they must *really* want. Our kids want that; they must want that too. There's been this projection upon them in the name of what could be called a vision of a "Technological Utopia."

The materialist argument boils down to who can make the best argument about the best, fastest and most efficient use of the world's resources. The point of the best, most efficient use of the world's resources in the capitalist mind is that it con-

centrates the wealth of all of that into somebody's hands who has the best technology and the best business plan and the best, political inroads – who can mobilize it. If we think that way, than we're just caught in the socialist vs. capitalist paradigm. But we want to have a different kind of discussion; we want to talk about "subsistence." *Subsistence living has nothing to do with materialism.* People who live a subsistence life don't think of it as, 'Oh, I got seven pounds of fish today; I'm therefore materially well off.' They *are* materially well off, but they don't see the world that way. They see themselves living in the world and in a relationship to the world that is not only that the world nurtures them, but they have a reciprocal obligation to nurture it. They're here to maintain its survival as a coherent thing. That's what subsistence really is about. Subsistence isn't an economic exchange. It's a cultural, spiritual, social exchange that's intended to go on for generations. In fact, it's the most *moral* relationship with nature that humans have ever devised. It's a way of dealing with that which is greater than we are in a respectful and coherent and sane manner. We're not going to use it up; we're going to sustain it for the next generation, and the generation after that.

We're not going to win the materialist argument. And the destiny arguments, as we've seen, are deadly. Those are arguments that originate out of nationalisms or religious fervors and they are dangerous to people, to cultures and to the planet. The health of the earth depends on our ability to effectively articulate a new way. In many ways, it is the indigenous cultures' relationships to the earth that represents the only real hope for the long term survival of the people on any scale in the world.

They are here to maintain survival as a still plausible goal. I think what we need to do is that we need to try to get everybody under one psychological tent. We need to adopt a strategy so that the voices of the indigenous people can lead the way to a moral relationship to the planet. So how do we do this? What is it that motivates people to go out in front of a corporation to protest? What gets them out there? For the most part, what really gets people mobilized in the culture that we're in—natives and others—is a moral outrage that something's happening that has to be stopped. And that's what we need to trigger. Young people will gravitate to that. But while we're doing that, we need to support the integrity of our own communities. And when we go out and meet with other peoples, we need to support the integrity of our own communities. And when we go out and meet with other peoples, we need to represent the clarity that exists in our world about what we're really doing. We're really not arguing over whether we should get 40% of the board-foot value of the boards. That's not what we're doing. Subsistence means that there's a forest here today, and we find a way to make a living here. Then tomorrow, there's still a forest here. That's subsistence.

As far as the Europeans who first landed here, it must be said that they saw their problems very differently than we did, and still do. In Europe, the biggest problem was that they couldn't produce enough food to eat. They were hungry, and there was always the threat of famine. When they got to the Americas suddenly there was plenty to eat; in fact a big piece of the reason they came here was because Americans had so much to eat. They came and they found a first rate edible landscape, which they set out to destroy. You bring a bunch of sheep and cows and cut down all the trees for a couple of hundred years, and you don't have an edible landscape anymore.

What was at work on the European side was a willingness to battle nature. They tried to outsmart nature—that's what all their technology is about; that's what biotechnology particularly is about. The idea was to get what you want out of nature—resources, food—without nature's help. But for the Indians, the question was not how to make war on nature, but how to cooperate with nature? So Indians asked the question, "Okay, what happens if we try to go along with nature?" Instead of trying to plant blueberries down by the lake where

they always get flooded, why don't we plant more blueberries where nature already put blueberries in the already existing blueberry patch?

So when you look at what happened between Indians and Europeans when the Europeans came, the Indians were taking care of the land so there was grass to feed the deer. The deer and the buffalo were our domesticated animals. The Indians were right on top of it, they knew just what they wanted, they had a very sophisticated system of food management. But it was cooperative with nature. They also raised some basic questions of fundamental fairness. The Indians asked the question not about human to human; they asked that about human to land, human to animal, human to everything. And they tried to get Europeans to see that.

The thinking in Indian country was essentially one of respect, and the question was how do we actually live that out? If you read a lot of the literature from the Columbus moment until now, you see that the Indians were constantly imploring the Europeans to rethink their relationship with nature. "You've got it wrong," we said, "you've got to be fair." But the Europeans answer was to find the best possible outcome for themselves and that is, "I make money." And that's more or less still where it is.

The Whole Planet Is the Holy Land

Leslie Gray
(Oneida)
The Woodfish Institute

A basic question I invite students to ask themselves is; Where is the Holy Land? It can sound very strange to an Indian person to hear non-Indian people refer to the Middle East as the Holy Land. *This* is the Holy Land. This is where Onandoga is; the sacred counsel fire burns at Onandoga still. This is where the Black Hills are; the traditional vision questing place of Black Elk, Lame Deer and many others. This is where pilgrims crawl on their knees to be healed at Chimayo. This is where the spiritual city at Chaco Canyon was constructed with every point in alignment with the heavens. This is where Blue Lake is. This is where Big Mountain is. *This is the Holy Land.* Of course, all over the planet you will find sacred sights that were honored and preserved by the indigenous people of that bioregion. And of course, everywhere you step, you step on the sacred bones of ancestors. So the whole planet is the Holy Land.

Why is it important to feel the sacredness of the land you are on? Because at the dawn of the 21st century people are still going to war over the idea that one spot in the Middle East is the Holy Land. Another way to say it is that it is still possible for a few people interested in domination and power to bamboozle the many who only see one place and one religion based on the spiritual story of that place as sacred. And here in the U.S. where the prevailing culture clings to a narrow conception of a distant Holy Land, the public is easily bamboozled into war for control of distant natural resources. So there is a high cost for failing to acknowledge the whole earth as sacred.

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If you meet Native American people who sustain their worldview and preserve their traditions, they had to work very hard to do it, and maybe that's the thing to take away from this.

Non-Indians need to stuggle in a similar way: Don't participate in the myth of whiteness, there is no such thing. Every single person in the world has an ethnicity. Ethnic does not mean colored or being a person of color. Ethnicity is your culture and it's your culture as it relates to a particular place on earth, a particular bioregion, and a particular land. Everyone can trace those roots back for themselves. The most radical thing you can do is to start thinking of yourself as having come from someplace in this land. That thought alone is going to be a huge contradiction to the prevailing models.

Indigenous Ecological Knowledge

Darrell Posey
Oxford University

TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOOD SYSTEMS embrace principles of sustainability which, across cultures and regions, generally emphasize the following values: co-operation; family bonding and cross-generational communication—including links with ancestors; concern for the well-being of future generations; self-sufficiency and reliance on locally available natural resources; rights to lands, territories and collective and inalienable (as opposed to individual and alienable) resources; restraint in resource exploitation and respect for nature, particularly sacred sites.

Two Native American scientists, Raymond Pierotti and Daniel R. Wildcat, have said: "Living with nature has little to do with the often voiced 'love of nature,' 'closeness to nature,' or desire 'to commune with nature' one hears today. Living with nature is very different from 'conservation' of nature. It is crucial to realize that nature exists on its own terms, and that non-humans have their own reasons for existence, independent of human interpretation. Those who desire to dance with wolves must first learn to live with wolves."

Pierotti and Wildcat also point out the concepts of "biodiversity" and "conservation" are not indigenous and, indeed, are alien to indigenous peoples. This does not mean they do not respect and foster living things, but rather that nature is an extension of society. Biodiversity is not an object or idea to be conserved, it is an integral part of human existence. This is why the conservation and management practices of indigenous peoples are highly pragmatic—for them, this traditional knowledge emanates from a *spiritual* base.

For the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people, Onondaga Nation Chief Oren Lyons has said, "all living beings are kin." Many indigenous peoples believe they once spoke the language of animals and their shamans still have this ability. Biodiversity, therefore, is actually the "extended family." The Hawaiian concept of *lokahi* (unity) is the "nurturing, supportive and harmonious relations" linking land, the gods, humans and the forces of nature. Thus, when outsiders (environmentalists, developers, scientists, etc.) see themselves as working with elements of nature, indigenous peoples may view these same activities as meddling in the internal affairs of the "extended family."

Whereas scientific and economic forces assume traditional communities must change to meet "modern" standards, indigenous and traditional peoples feel the opposite must occur: science and industry must begin to respect local diversity and the delicate balance between life, land and society. With its quantum mechanics methods, Western science and technology are at a loss to address the universe as a whole, yet we are left with an isolated, linear logic setting international policies.

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Two of the most damaging aspects of international trade policies are these: market prices of natural resources are determined only by the external, corporate system and do not reflect the true costs, environmentally and socially, of those resources, and—despite the sustenance (food, shelter, medicine, etc.) diverse natural resources provide for native populations—the knowledge and care of these resources by indigenous peoples are ascribed no value; they are free for the taking. This "intellectual *terra nullius*" or "empty land" concept allowed colonial powers to expropriate "discovered" land for their empires. Corporations and states still defend this morally vacuous concept because it supports "biopiracy" of local folk varieties of crops, traditional medicines and useful plant and animal species.

Scientists have been accomplices to these raids by publishing data which is catapulted into the public domain and gleaned by "bioprospectors" like pharmaceutical companies, seeking new products. It is also commonplace for scientists to declare areas and resources "wild" through igno-

rance, or negligence, without even the most basic investigations into archaeological, historical or actual human management practices.

This is more than semantics. "Wild" and "wilderness" imply these landscapes and resources are the result of "nature" and, as such, have no owners—they are the "common heritage of all humankind." This has been a convenient way for corporations seeking resources to target such places, because it suggests local communities have no tenurial or ownership rights, and thus their lands, territories and resources are "free" to others just for the taking. For this reason indigenous peoples have come to oppose the use of terms like "wilderness" and "wild" to refer to the regions in which they live. As far as they're concerned, their source of sustenance—physical, societal and spiritual—is not "up for grabs." It is little wonder indigenous groups in the Pacific region have declared a moratorium on all scientific research until protection of traditional knowledge and genetic resources can be guaranteed to local communities.

By declaring useful local plants as "wild" and entire ecosystems as "wildernesses," scientists have not only perpetuated the *terra nullius* concept, but also, ignored knowledge of ecosystems having been molded, managed and protected by humans for millennia. Indigenous, traditional and local communities have sustainably utilized and conserved a vast diversity of plants, animals and ecosystems since the dawn of *Homo sapiens*.

Western society may have invented the words "nature," "biodiversity" and "sustainability," but it certainly did not initiate these concepts. One hundred thousand years before the term "sustainable development" was coined, aboriginal peoples were trading seeds, dividing tubers and propagating domesticated and non-domesticated plant species. Human beings have, for millennia, molded environments through their conscious and unconscious activities to create "sacred sites"—what anthropologists call "anthropogenic" or "cultural landscapes." These "sacred sites" or "cultural landscapes" express a merger between Nature and culture so complete it is impossible to separate the two.

In resistance to the construction of the Tellico Dam in Tennessee Valley, one Cherokee asserted, "If we are to make our offerings at a new place, the spiritual beings would not know us. We would not know the mountains or the significance of them. We would not know the land and the land would not know us. . . We would not know the sacred places. If we were to go on top of an unfamiliar mountain we would not know the life forms that dwell there."

For the Cherokee, when a dam floods the land, it also destroys the medicines and the knowledge of the medicines associated with that land. The sacred site tradition creates conservation areas of all kinds. Water sources are considered holy and so the areas around them are protected from disturbance; individual plant and animal species are protected by restricting human access. Wellsprings are the "soul of the Hopi people" representing their very identity and for the Masai and Fulani pastoralists, oases are sacred—their lives are dependent on the protection of these crucial resources.

Another example of a "cultural landscape" is the "forest island" (*apete*) created in savannas by the Kayapo of Brazil. The Indians have used detailed knowledge of soil fertility, microclimate, and plant varieties to plant and transplant non-domesticated species into wooded, useful concentrations. Historically, these *apete* have been considered "natural" by botanists and ecologists, even though they could never exist without the skill and management of the Indians. These sites are so seamlessly integrated into the ecosystem outsiders often cannot recognize them during land-use planning exercises. Another case in point is the Ontario resource managers who cannot detect the anthropogenic wild rice (*manomin*) fields of the Ojibway. The most common type of sacred site or cultural landscape is the sacred grove. The "dragon hills" of Yunan Province in China

are kept intact specifically because of their sacred nature. Likewise, Ghjanan groves are linked to burial grounds and spirits of the ancestors who protect the forests that surround them. Similar groves are reported in Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, and Ghana and throughout North America. In India, sacred groves are extensive and well known.

The balance of vegetation and wildlife is maintained by these refined systems of indigenous technologies. Many so-called "pristine" landscapes are in fact either created by humans or modified and cultivated by human activity, such as controlled fires. Tragically, however, the failure of Western economic and scientific forces to recognize sacred and other cultural landscapes has blinded them to the management practices of indigenous peoples and local communities. Aboriginal peoples, for instance, have been centralized into settlements and as fire management has disappeared, not only have sacred sites and the indigenous knowledge associated with them been neglected, but mammal populations and plant species have visibly declined as well.

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Until the colonial period, many ancient indigenous agricultural and land management systems survived. These systems were based on complex ecological knowledge and understanding, were highly efficient, productive, and inherently sustainable. The raised bed systems used for millennia by traditional farmers of tropical America, Asia and Africa are classic examples. Known variously in Meso-America as *chinampas*, *waru waru*, and *tablones*, these were extremely effective for irrigation, drainage, soil fertility maintenance, frost control and plant disease management. In India, peasants grow over forty different crops on localities cultivated for more than 2,000 years without a drop in yields, yet remarkably free of pests.

Agro-biodiversity is the foundation of all agriculture, both modern and traditional. Whereas modern science depends on gene bank collections to support diversity, traditional farmers combine, select and screen planting materials, and thus, have been successfully maintaining agro-biodiversity for thousands of years. The importance of foraging to traditional cultures also supports biodiversity, since wild foods are gathered from managed land areas, rather than agricultural plots. Traditional systems and management strategies, like the Brazilian practice of integrating agriculture with fishing techniques, strengthens the network of all living things.

Local, traditional knowledge plays a major role in medicines and health systems as well. According to the World Health Organization, up to 80% of the non-industrial world's population still relies on traditional forms of medicines. A fundamental concept in traditional health systems is of balance between mind and body, given that both are linked to community, local environments and the universe. Ayurvedic and traditional Chinese medicines define disease as "breaking of the interconnectedness of life." Above all, healthy ecosystems are critical to healthy societies and individuals, because humanity and nature are one, not in opposition to each other.

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To reverse the devastating cycle which industrialized society has imposed on the planet, we will have to relearn ecological knowledge and earnestly deal with the tough question: "Can sustainable practices harmonize with growth of trade and increased consumption?" We will have to sustain an ecologically powerful enough argument to offset deforestation, soil erosion, species extinction and pollution; a global environmental ethic, implacable enough even for global and economically powerful institutions, will have to be implemented and enforced. These undertakings may be daunting, but the wisdom of traditional and indigenous peoples continues to guide us. As Bepkororoti Paiakan, a Kayapo chief from Brazil, puts it: "We are trying to save the knowledge that the forests and this planet are alive—to give it back to you who have lost the understanding."

"The Okanagan teach that each person is born into a family and community. You belong. You are them. Not to have community or family is to be scattered or falling apart. The bond of community and family includes the history of the many who came before us and the many ahead of us who share our flesh. Our most serious teaching is that community comes first in our choices, then family, and then ourselves as individuals... We also refer to the land and our bodies with the same root syllable. This means that the flesh that is our body is pieces of the land come to us. The soil, the water, the air, and all the other life forms contributed parts to be our flesh. We are our land."

CHAPTER 4

Community: "Sharing One Skin"

Jeanette Armstrong
(Okanagan)
Director, En'owkin Centre

I AM FROM THE OKANAGAN, a part of British Columbia that is much like most of California in climate—very dry and hot. Around my birthplace are two rock mountain ranges: the Cascades on one side and the Selkirks on the other. The river is the Columbia. It is the main river that flows through our lands, and there are four tributaries: the Kettle, the Okanagan/Smikanean, the San Poil, and the Methow.

My mother is a river Indian. She is from Kettle Falls, which is the main confluence of the Columbia River near Inchelieum. The Kettle River people are in charge of the fisheries in all of the northern parts of the Columbia River system in our territories. The Arrow Lakes and the tributaries from the Kettle flow south through the Columbia Basin. My great-grandmother's husband was a salmon chief and caretaker of the river in the north.

My father's people are mountain people. They occupied the northern part of British Columbia, known as the Okanagan Valley. My father's people were hunters — the people in the Okanagan who don't live in the river basin. They were always a separate culture from the river people. My name is passed on from my father's side of the family and is my great-grandmother's name. I am associated with my father's side, but I have a right and a responsibility to the river through my mother's birth and my family education.

So that is who I am and where I take my identity from. I know the mountains, and, by birth, the river is my responsibility: They are part of me. I cannot be separated from my place or my land.

When I introduce myself to my own people in my own language, I describe these things because it tells them what my responsibilities are and what my goal is. It tells them what my connection is, how I need to conduct myself, what I need to carry with me, what I project, what I teach and what I think about, what I must do and what I can't do. The way we talk about ourselves as Okanagan people is difficult to replicate in English. Our word for people, for humanity, for human beings, is difficult to say without talking about connection to the land. When we say the Okanagan word for ourselves, we are actually saying "the ones who are dream and land together." That is our original identity. Before anything else, we are the living, dreaming Earth pieces. It's a second identification that means human; we identify ourselves as separate from other things on the land.

The word Okanagan comes from a whole understanding of what we are as human beings. We can identify ourselves through that word. In our interaction, in our prayer, we identify ourselves as human as well, different from birds and trees and animals. When we say that, there is a first part of the word and an s; whenever you put an s in front of any word, you turn it into a physical thing, a noun. The first part of a word refers to a physical realm.

The second part of the word refers to the dream or to the dream state. Dream is the closest word that approximates the Okanagan. But our word doesn't precisely mean dream. It actually means "the unseen part of our existence as human beings." It may be the mind or the spirit or the intellect. So that second part of the word adds the perspective that we are mind as well as matter. We are dream, memory, and imagination.

The third part of the word means that if you take a number of strands, hair, or twine, place them together, and then rub your hands and bind them together, they become one strand. You use this thought symbolically when you make a rope and when you make twine, thread, and homemade baskets, and when you weave the threads to make the coiled basket. That third part of the word refers to us being tied into and part of everything else. It refers to the dream parts of ourselves forming our community, and it implies what our relationships are. We say, "This is my clan," or, "This is my people. These are the families that I came from. These are my great-grandparents," and so on. In this way I know my position and my responsibility for that specific location and geographic area. That is how I introduce myself. That is how I like to remember who I am and what my role is.

One of the reasons I explain this is to try to bring our whole society closer to that kind of understanding, because without that deep connection to the environment, to the earth, to what we actually are, to what humanity is, we lose our place, and confusion and chaos enter. We then spend a lot of time dealing with that confusion.

When we Okanagans speak of ourselves as individual beings within our bodies, we identify the whole person as having four main capacities that operate together: the physical self, the emotional self, the thinking-intellectual self, and the spiritual self. The four selves have equal importance in the way we function within and experience all things. They join us to the rest of creation in a healthy way.

The physical self is one part of the whole self that depends entirely on the parts of us that exist beyond the skin. We survive within our skin and inside the rest of our vast "external" selves. We survive by the continuous interaction between our bodies and everything around us. We are only partly aware of that interaction in our intellect, through our senses. Okanagans teach that the body is Earth itself. Our flesh, blood, and bones are Earth-body; in all cycles in which Earth moves, so does our body. We are everything that surrounds us, including the vast forces we only glimpse. If we cannot continue as an individual life form, we dissipate back into the larger self. Our body-mind is extremely knowledgable in that way. As Okanagans we say the body is sacred. It is the core of our being, which permits the rest of the self to be. It is the great gift of our existence. Our word for body literally means "the land-dreaming capacity."

The emotional self is differentiated from the physical self, the thinking-intellectual self, and the spiritual self. In our language, the emotional self is that which connects to other parts of our larger selves around us. We use a word that translates as heart. It is a capacity to form bonds with particular aspects of our surroundings. We say that we as people stay connected to each other, our land, and all things by our hearts.

The thinking-intellectual self has another name in Okanagan. Our word for thinking/logic and

storage of information (memory) is difficult to translate into English because it does not have an exact correlation. The words that come closest in my interpretation mean "the spark that ignites." We use the term that translates as "directed by the ignited spark" to refer to analytical thought. In the Okanagan language this means that the other capacities we engage in when we take action are directed by the spark of memory once it is ignited. We know in our traditional Okanagan methods of education we must be disciplined to work in concert with the other selves to engage ourselves beyond our automatic-reponse capacity. We know too that unless we always join this thinking capacity to the heart-self, its power can be a destructive force both to ourselves and to the larger selves that surround us. A fire that is not controlled can destroy.

The Okanagan teach that each person is born into a family and a community. No person is born isolated from those two things. You are born into a way of interacting with one another. As an Okanagan you are automatically a part of the rest of the community. You belong. You are them. You are within a family and community. You are that which is family and community; within that you cannot be separate.

All within family and community are affected by the actions of any one individual, and so all must know this in their individual selves. The capacity to bond is absolutely critical to individual wellness. Without it the person is said to be "crippled/incapacitated" and "lifeless." Not to have community or family is to be scattered or falling apart.

The Okanagan refer to relationship to others by a word that means "our one skin." This means that we share more than a place; we share a physical tie that is uniquely human. It also means that the bond of community and family includes the history of the many who came before us and the many ahead of us who share our flesh. We are tied together by those who brought us here and gave us blood and gave us place. Our most serious teaching is that community comes first in our choices, then family, and then ourselves as individuals, because without community and family we are truly not human.

The Okanagan perception of the self and that of the dominant culture has to do with the "us" that is place: the capacity to know we are everything that surrounds us; to experience our humanness in relation to all else and in consequence to know how we affect the world around us.

The Okanagan word for "our place on the land" and "our language" is the same. We think of our language as the language of the land. This means that the land has taught us our language. The way we survived is to speak the language that the land offered us as its teachings. To know all the plants, animals, seasons, and geography is to construct language for them.

We also refer to the land and our bodies with the same root syllable. This means that the flesh that is our body is pieces of the land come to us through the things that the land is. The soil, the water, the air, and all the other life forms contributed parts to be our flesh. We are our land/place. Not to know and to celebrate this is to be without language and without land. It is to be dis-placed.

The Okanagan teach that anything displaced from all that it requires to survive in health will eventually perish. Unless place can be relearned, all other life forms will face displacement and then ruin.

As Okanagan, our most essential responsibility is to bond our whole individual and communal selves to the land. Many of our ceremonies have been constructed for this. We join with the larger self and with the land, and rejoice in all that we are. We are this one part of the Earth. Without this self and this bond, we are not human.

The discord that we see around us, to my view from inside my Okanagan community, is at a

level that is not endurable without consequences to the human and therefore to everything that the human influences. A suicidal coldness is seeping into and permeating all levels of interaction; there is a dispassion of energy that has become a way of life in illness and other forms of human pain. I am not implying that we no longer suffer for each other as humans but rather that such suffering is felt deeply and continuously and cannot be withstood, so feeling must be shut off.

I think of the Okanagan word used by my father to describe this condition, and I understand it better. Translation is difficult, but an interpretation in English might be "people without hearts."

Okanagans say that "heart" is where community and land come into our beings and become part of us because they are as essential to our survival as our own skin. By this bond, we subvert destruction to other humans and to our surroundings and ensure our own survival.

When the phrase people without hearts is used, it refers to collective disharmony and alienation from land. It refers to those who are blind to self-destruction, whose emotion is narrowly focused on their individual sense of well-being without regard to the well-being of others in the collective.

The results of this dispassion are now being displayed as large nation-states continuously reconfigure economic boundaries into a world economic disorder to cater to big business. This is causing a tidal flow of refugees from environmental and social disasters, compounded by disease and famine as people are displaced in the rapidly expanding worldwide chaos. War itself becomes continuous as dispossession, privatization of lands, and exploitation of resources and a cheap labor force become the mission of "peacekeeping." The goal of finding new markets is the justification for the Westernization of "undeveloped" cultures.

Indigenous people, not long removed from our cooperative self-sustaining life-styles on our lands, do not survive well in this atmosphere of aggression and dispassion. I know that we experience it as a destructive force, because I personally experience it so. Without being whole in our community, on our land, with the protection it has as a reservation, I could not survive.

The customs of extended families in community are carried out through communing rather than communicating. I want to illuminate the significance of communing and point out that through its loss we have become dehumanized. To me, communing signifies sharing and bonding. Communicating signifies the transfer and exchange of information. The Okanagan word close in meaning to communing is "the way of creating compassion for." We use it to mean the physical acts we perform to create the internal capacity to bond.

One of the critical losses in our homes in this society originates in the disassociation we experience as a result of modern "communications" technology. People emotionally associate more with characters on television than with people in their lives. They become emotional strangers to each other and emotional cripples in the family and community.

In a healthy whole community, the people interact with each other in shared emotional response. They move together emotionally to respond to crisis or celebration. They "commune" in the everyday act of living. Being a part of such a communing is to be fully alive, fully human. To be without community in this way is to be alive only in the flesh, to be alone, to be lost to being human. It is then possible to violate and destroy others and their property without remorse.

With these things in mind, I see how a market economy subverts community to where whole cities are made up of total strangers on the move from one job to another. This is unimaginable to us. How can a person be a human while continuously living in isolation, fear, and adversity? How can people twenty yards away from each

other be total strangers? I do see that having to move continuously just to live is painful and that close emotional ties are best avoided in such an economy. I do not see how one remains human, for community to me is feeling the warm security of familiar people like a blanket wrapped around you, keeping out the frost. The word we use to mean community loosely translates to "having one covering," as in a blanket. I see how family is subverted by the scattering of members over the face of the globe. I cannot imagine how this could be family, and I ask what replaces it if the generations do not anchor to each other. I see that my being is present in this generation and in our future ones, just as the generations of the past speak to me through stories. I know that community is made up of extended families moving together over the landscape of time, through generations converging and dividing like a cell while remaining essentially the same as community. I see that in sustainable societies, extended family and community are inseparable.

The Okanagan word we have for extended family is translated as "sharing one skin." The concept refers to blood ties within community and the instinct to protect our individual selves extended to all who share the same skin. I know how powerful the solidarity is of peoples bound together by land, blood, and love. This is the largest threat to those interests wanting to secure control of lands and resources that have been passed on in a healthy condition from generation to generation of families.

Land bonding is not possible in the kind of economy surrounding us, because land must be seen as real estate to be "used" and parted with if necessary. I see the separation is accelerated by the concept that "wilderness" needs to be tamed by "development" and that this is used to justify displacement of peoples and unwanted species. I know what it feels like to be an endangered species on my land, to see the land dying with us. It is my body that is being torn, deforested, and poisoned by "development." Every fish, plant, insect, bird, and animal that disappears is part of me dying. I know all their names, and I touch them with my spirit. I feel it every day, as my grandmother and my father did.

I am pessimistic about changes happening: the increase of crimes, worldwide disasters, total anarchy, and the possible increase of stateless oligarchies; borders are disappearing, and true sustainable economies are crumbling. However, I have learned that crisis can help build community so that it can face the crisis itself.

I do know that people must come to community on the land. The transiency of peoples crisscrossing the land must halt, and people must commune together on the land to protect it and all our future generations. Self-sustaining indigenous peoples still on the land are already doing this and are the only ones now standing between society and total self-destruction. They present an opportunity to relearn and reinstitute the rights we all have as humans. Indigenous rights must be protected, for we are the protectors of Earth.

I know that being Okanagan helps me have the capacity to bond with everything and every person I encounter. I try always to personalize everything. I try not to be "objective" about anything.

I fear those who are unemotional, and I solicit emotional response whenever I can. I do not stand silently by. I stand with you against the disorder.