

The Haudenosaunee Message to the Western World

The Haudenosaunee, or the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy, has existed on this land since the beginning of human memory. Our culture is among the most ancient continuously existing cultures in the world.

In the beginning, we were told that the human beings who walk about on the Earth have been provided with all the things necessary of life. We were instructed to carry a love for one another, and to show a great respect for all the beings of this Earth. We are shown that our life exists with the tree life, that our well-being depends on the well-being of the vegetable Life, that we are close relatives of the four-legged beings. In our ways, spiritual consciousness is the highest form of politics....

The original instructions direct that we who walk about on the Earth are to express a great respect, an affection, and a gratitude toward all the spirits which create and support Life. We give a greeting and thanksgiving to the many supporters of our own lives-the corn, beans, squash, the winds, the sun. When people cease to respect and express gratitude for these many things, then all life will be destroyed, and human life on this planet will come to an end....

Our essential message to the world is a basic call to consciousness. The destruction of the Native cultures and people is the same process which has destroyed and is destroying life on this planet. The technologies and social systems which have destroyed the animal and the plant life are also destroying the Native people. And the process is Western Civilization....

The processes of colonialism and imperialism which have affected the Haudenosaunee are but a microcosm of the processes affecting the world. The system of reservations employed against our people is a microcosm of the system of exploitation used against the whole world. Since the time of Marco Polo, the West has been refining a process that has mystified the peoples of the Earth.

The majority of the world does not find its roots in Western culture or traditions. The majority of the world finds its roots in the Natural World, and it is the Natural World, and the traditions of the Natural World, which must prevail if we are to develop truly free and egalitarian societies.

It is necessary, at this time, that we begin a process of critical analysis of the West's historical processes, to seek out the actual nature of the roots of the exploitative and oppressive conditions which are forced upon humanity. At the same time, as we gain understanding of those processes, we must reinterpret that history to the people of the world. It is the people of the West, ultimately, who are the most oppressed and exploited. They are burdened by the weight of centuries of racism, sexism, and ignorance which has rendered their people insensitive to the true nature of their lives.

We must all consciously and continuously challenge every model, every program, and every process that the West tries to force upon us. Paulo Friere wrote, in his book, the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, that it is the nature of the oppressed to imitate the oppressor, and by such actions try to gain relief from the oppressive condition. We must learn to resist that response to oppression.

The people who are living on this planet need to break with the narrow concept of human liberation, and begin to see liberation as something which needs to be extended to the whole of the Natural World. What is needed is the liberation of all the things that support Life-the air, the waters, the trees-all the things which support the sacred web of Life.

We feel that the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere can continue to contribute to the survival potential of the human species. The majority of our peoples still live in accordance with the traditions which find their roots in the Mother Earth. But the Native peoples have need of a forum in which our voice can be heard. And we need alliances with the other peoples of the world to assist in our struggle to regain and maintain our ancestral lands and to protect the Way of Life we follow.

We know that this is a very difficult task. Many nation states may feel threatened by the position that the protection and liberation of Natural World peoples and cultures represents, a progressive direction which must be integrated into the political strategies of people who seek to uphold the dignity of Man. But that position is growing in strength, and it represents a necessary strategy in the evolution of progressive thought.

The traditional Native peoples hold the key to the reversal of the processes in Western Civilization which threaten unimaginable future suffering and destruction. Spiritualism is the highest form of political consciousness. And we, the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere, are among the world's surviving proprietors of that kind of consciousness. We are here to impart that message.

Taken from:

A Basic Call to Consciousness, Akwesasne Notes, Mohawk Nation, 1978 (revised edition, 1981).

The whole book **A Basic Call to Consciousness** is available on line at cinetopia.net, what follows is a summary of the book, numbers refer to page numbers in the book.

1.- Male and female leaders chosen from clans, must be by unanimous vote. Leaders must possess both political and spiritual integrity. They are chosen for life, but can be removed for acting against the will of the people. "It is the belief of our people that all elements of the Natural World were created for the benefit of all living things and that we, as humans, are one of the weakest of the whole Creation, since we are totally dependent on the whole Creation for our survival."

8.- Governments formed to establish tranquility. Not just law and order, but peace. Peace blends power, reason, and righteousness. People with the purest and most unselfish minds can have righteousness - when they put their minds and emotions in harmony with the flow of the universe and the intentions of the Good Mind or the Great Creator. Toss out thoughts of prejudice, privilege, or superiority. Recognize that Creation is intended for the benefit of all equally. Reason is used to settle complicated issues without the use of force. Force should only be used in defense against force.

9.- Power to enact true peace is the product of a unified people on the path of righteousness and reason. Five nations joined together, and their separate lands were joined, to eliminate hunting disputes.

10.- Peacemaker assigned people to clans, and their relationships were so close that they didn't marry others in the same clan of another nation.

11.- They created advanced participatory democracy, not representative. Peoples and individuals were recognized. So were folks who were not members of the host nation - as long as they observed the rules of non-aggression and didn't try to create factionalism among the people.

47.- People in Six Nations saw that vertical hierarchy creates conflicts, so they organized society to avoid it. Lands were held in common to avoid conflict. Anyone who entered Haudenosaunee land was guaranteed safety. Universal rules about the taking of game.

48.- Haudenosaunee have long term perspective, which sees modern man as an infant - the elders see the young child is committing incredibly destructive folly.

49.- We believe that all living things are spiritual beings. We walk about with great respect, for the Earth is a very sacred place.

50.- Euros began domesticating, herding, and breeding animals. Previously, humans depended on the reproductive powers of nature - now they took this power themselves.

51.- First came pottery kilns, then ovens that could smelt metals. Iron used for tools to cut trees, made into charcoal, to make metals. Iron plow, pulled by domesticated horses. Fewer people needed on the land, displaced - rise of cities, trade, the end of the European forest.

52.- Western civilization is on a death path, and this culture has no viable answers.

53.- It is typically the nature of the oppressed to imitate the oppressor. We must continuously challenge and resist every program and process of the oppressors.

54.- The Haudenosaunee constitution - the Great Law of Peace, is the oldest functioning document in the world, which contains freedom of speech and religion, the rights of women, separation of powers, checks and balances. Colonists learned this stuff from natives.

57.- "The dispossession of the Native people was accomplished by the Europeans in the bloodiest and most brutal chapter of human history. They were acts committed, seemingly, by a people without conscience or standards of behavior." US and Canadian governments continue to deny genocide.

64.- Euros stimulated conflicts between natives. Natives got into fur trade, out of necessity, to get guns to protect themselves.

65.- Missionaries sent in, carrying message, splitting off individuals from families, families from villages, villages from nations, one by one.

74.- Colonizers tell political histories - King Dudley conquered Smithtown in 1600. Way more important is techno history - agriculture, domestication, irrigation.

75.- "The current crisis which the world is facing is not difficult for people to understand. In the Western Hemisphere, the United States with six percent of the world's population, uses 40 percent of the world's energy resources. The world's supply of fossil fuels is finite, and it is estimated that within 30 years, at the present rate of consumption, the peoples of the world will begin to run out of some of those sources of energy, especially petroleum and natural gas. As the planet begins to run short of cheap energy, it is predictable that the world market economy will suffer and the people of the world who are dependent on that economy will suffer likewise. The reality of world population growth is placed beside the reality of the current relationship of energy resources and food production, it becomes obvious that worldwide famine is a real possibility."

77.- Liberation movements don't understand the problem - the need to become independent of the world economy. It doesn't matter if Death Corp or the People's Revolutionary Cooperative grows the sugar - export crops don't meet the needs of the indigenous population.

"It will be obvious to many non-Western peoples that it is the renewable quality of earth's ecosystem which makes life possible for human beings on this planet, and that if anything is sacred, if anything determines both quality and future possibility of life for our species on this planet, it is the renewable quality of life."

78.- "The renewable quality - the sacredness of every living thing, that which connects human beings to the place which they inhabit - the quality is the single most liberating aspect of our environment. Life is renewable and all the things which support life are renewable, and they are renewed by a spiritual element that connects us to reality and the manifestation of an eagle or a mountain snowfall - that consciousness was the first thing which was destroyed by the colonizers."

"Many of our communities are struggling against colonialism in all of its forms. We have established food coops, survival schools, alternative technology projects, adult education programs, agricultural projects, crafts programs, and serious efforts at cultural revitalization are underway." (*published in Akwesasne Notes, "Rooseveltville: New York", 1978*).