

Leadership and the Environment – Creation Care

by Sto:lo Nation Elder - Eddie Gardner

Presented - Saturday November 15, 2014 Creation Care Conversation@ Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, BC, Canada.

"The Stó:lō people, as with other indigenous people across Turtle Island have a deep respect and reverence for our Sacred Mother Earth. The old ones began important meetings related to the land and the waters with this statement:

"S'ólh Temexw te'i. Xyolhmet te mekw stam it kwelat!"
"I'xw lets'axwt ye sth'óqwi qe'su lats'axwt te slhe'amex."

"This is our homeland, we have to take care of everything that belongs to us!"
"If you destroy the wild salmon, you destroy the world."

We take care of our land, the sacred waters and the air with the thought of benefiting the next seven generations. Embodying this philosophy or way of being, we need to think of the vision of our ancestors which is to live in harmony with the natural world, to follow natural laws, by not taking from the natural world more than we need. We encourage everyone to embrace this important world view, and like torches rekindled, find the light of our ancestors inside our own hearts and carry it through the darkness of these deeply troubled times.

We must respect and honor all that is not human. When matter is seen as devoid of spirit, then nature can be desecrated without a second thought; when one form of nature is seen as devoid of spirit, then all forms of life can be desecrated without a second thought; when one form of life is seen as devoid of spirit, then human beings can desecrate one another without a second thought. For this reason, the spirit warrior sees the world as the divine homeland shared by the living and the dead and those not yet born.

The more you put the world-view of the ancients into practice, the more you have to offer others.

Ethics emerge from bad judgment – they are the collective memory of what does not benefit the whole. Those who work together to serve others must encourage one another to maintain humility and respect at all times, even in private.

Principles emerge from ethics – they are the collective memory of what is worth striving for. Peace is achieved when leaders are content and sincere – prosperity is achieved when leaders do not concentrate the wealth. Nothing holds people together better than sustained peace and prosperity. We leave no one behind, all must benefit, including our relatives in the natural world.

Wisdom emerges from principles – it is the collective memory of what produces happiness. Those who evaluate their own conduct, building on their successes and correcting their faults, dwell together in shared well-being. This is the road of freedom that leads to our collective benefit, to peace and happiness.

The single most pressing issue facing Canada and the world is global warming. Global warming is here and it is going to get worse even if we all stop using fossil fuels immediately. As depressing as this is, it will mean the end of life on earth if we continue “business as usual, and make no effort to stop using fossil fuels. Doing nothing about this is not the answer. It is becoming more imperative all the time to move towards developing clean energy technology and promote every opportunity to create local economies instead of feeding into the global economy that has fossil fuel fever and has infected everyone of us.

Why is this a critical issue?

Wild salmon make the forest grow – pulling carbon out of the atmosphere and providing humans oxygen. Wild salmon, in essence, is a global climate stabilizer. Wild salmon is essential to the maintenance of biodiversity as it feeds multiple species from the headwaters to the big ocean. Wild salmon is an integral part of the social, cultural, physical and spiritual wellbeing of indigenous people. We Stó:lō acknowledge wild salmon as our relatives. In today’s world, preserving wild salmon is an international responsibility, as wild salmon know no borders. This is of particular concern to British Columbia, Washington and Alaska.

The key messages we want to deliver and maintain consistently are:

Stop Imperial Metals operations

On August 4, 2014, Imperial Metals Mount Polley Mine Corporation unleashed billions of gallons of toxic wastewater from their massive tailings storage facility into Polly Lake. The toxic wastewater rushed out, ripping out a 300-foot wide scar in the forest where Hazeltine Creek used to be. The contaminated wastewater further spilled into Quesnel Lake, which connects to Quesnel River and the Fraser River watershed. Imperial Metals was issued five warnings about the tailings storage facility which was already spilling over in May, 2014. Imperial Metals has failed at mining, and the province of BC failed in its oversight of their operations. This company will not deal with the aftermath of mining disasters directly resulting from their own negligence and greed. Yet, with provincial government approval, Imperial Metals is already operating or plans to operate mines with the same tailings dam design as Mount Polley Mine in Tahltan territory, Ahousaht territory, Tla-o-qui-aht territory, Southern Secwepemc territory and already has a mine in operation in Wet’suwet’en territory.

Imperial Metals cannot be trusted.

Solution: Put a moratorium on mining until legislative reforms and regulations are in place that will prevent another mining disaster. Require Imperial Metals to stop leaking their toxic tailings into the Quesnel watershed and to clean up their mess they irresponsibly caused with reckless disregard to the Quesnel river that hosts the world's second largest wild salmon run. Require Imperial Mines to restore the ecosystem they severely degraded. Impose penalties on Imperial Mines for the disruptions they caused to the municipalities and First Nations communities in the impacted area. "The loss of the salmon, for us as Secwepemc is a matter of life and death for our culture. Can our salmon survive this devastation?" - Jean William.

Stop Kinder Morgan and Enbridge and Fracking for Gas

There is growing awareness and understanding that fossil fuels are exhaustible, increasingly expensive, and politically, ecologically and climatically toxic. We need to prevent BC from becoming a fossil fuel dumpsite. We must avoid allowing corporations to use BC as a sacrifice zone even if they have the approval of governments that are not looking after the people they were elected to represent. We have truly crossed the red line, which is being ignored by the power elites. The feverish drive to exhaust fossil fuels, which are finite, will see the massive global economy hit the proverbial wall when demand far exceeds supply. The fact is that we are entering an era when global warming caused by extreme extraction of fossil fuels is dangerously becoming unmanageable and irreversible. The drive to extract every last drop of oil and gas from the earth will only quicken the closing the door of opportunity to steer away from unbearable living conditions on this planet. With respect to geotechnology, there are no emergency techno-fixes without unknown side effects that would dangerously make things worse. The solution to global warming is not to "fix" the world, but to fix us. We humans are the problem. We all have a stake in building livable communities while we still have the chance.

Solution: To build a new economy that is sustainable and safe, British Columbia and Canada needs to see the value and need to divest from fossil fuels and invest heavily in wind, solar and geothermal technologies to power a robust green economy that creates long-term, meaningful employment. Form a new order, whereby government and industry keep the vast majority of fossil fuel reserves in the ground and out of our common atmosphere, and provide enabling legislation and financial investments and subsidies for a rapid transition to renewable energy. Building public transportation systems would go a long way to wean us off fossil fuels. An enforceable legal framework needs to be established to enable, support and promote an emerging green economy, including organic small farms, wild fisheries, responsible mining, and ecotourism and regulated forestry practices. Dr. Vandana Shiva, an Indian environmental activist and anti-globalization author, points out that shifting to an agriculture modeled on agro-ecological methods would not only sequester large amounts of carbon, it would reduce emissions and increase healthy food security.

Legal precedents supporting constitutionally established Aboriginal Rights and Title would be an essential part of the foundation of this legal framework. Enshrining in

the Constitution of Canada the right to a clean environment as promoted by David Suzuki would reinforce building the legal framework for a sustainable and safe economy. Science continues to tell us we need to keep the vast majority of proven fossil fuel reserves in the ground, and provide sufficient resources and expertise for rapid transition to renewable energy.

Declare Foreign and Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement (FIPPA) between China and Canada Null and Void.

FIPPA was undemocratically approved in the absence of debate in the House of Commons, and violates the duty to consult First Nations under Section 35 of the Constitution of Canada. FIPPA erodes Canadian sovereignty through a provision in this agreement that allows China to sue Canada for the loss of expected profits that would be determined through binding arbitration in a secret tribunal. This makes entire Canadian legal system irrelevant, including the Supreme Court of Canada. The provision also makes environmental protection measures by any level of government in Canada subject to financial costs Canadians would be unable to afford. The Harper government ratified FIPPA despite the fact that a legal challenge from the Hupacasath First Nation is still before the courts. The deal, which China has already ratified, has gone into effect October 1, 2014 and locks Canada into the sweeping agreement at least 31 years.

Solution: Support Hupacasath First Nation 's request to other First Nations across Canada to write the People's Republic of China stating they do not acknowledge the Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement commonly known as FIPPA.

Canadians can approach their City Councils and ask them to follow suit, as municipalities' power to protect their citizens will be overridden by the Canada-China FIPPA, especially those municipalities who have taken a stand and barred Kinder Morgan and Enbridge's Northern Gateway from pipelines entering their jurisdiction. Together we must make it clear to the People's Republic of China that the Government of Canada did not follow due process by consulting First Nations, Municipalities, Parliament and the citizens of Canada.

Revoke Fish Farm Leases – Promote Sustainable Land-Based Aquaculture

The federal government is currently enabling and promoting an aggressive 41% expansion of fish farms along the migration routes of Fraser sockeye salmon. This is in defiance of the Cohen Commission recommendations related specifically to fish farms, and there are no plans to view farm locations in relationship to inward/outward migration of wild salmon. Government critics say Ottawa has still not adequately responded to Cohen's recommendations, and if it did, their response is shrouded in secrecy. Atlantic salmon feedlots are breeding grounds for amplifying sea lice. Those feedlots are like incubating wards of viruses with European strains, most likely imported to Canada in Atlantic salmon eggs from Norway. These pathogens flow out of those open-net cages and can spread to

Fraser River sockeye smolts that swim past those open net pens in the narrow straights between Vancouver Island and the mainland. Tons of growing Atlantic salmon trapped in open-net pens release their untreated feces that degrade the marine environment.

The Harper government removed Section 36 of the Fisheries Act to allow the release of substances harmful to fish, because the salmon farmers need more drugs to fight sea lice. The DFO mandate no longer even includes wild salmon anymore <http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/about-notre-sujet/org/vision-eng.htm>.

As the Harper government moves closer to the 2015 election, it is in a hurry to change laws to prop up the fish farm industry at the expense of wild salmon and its habitat. See Dr. Alexandra Morton's posting: DFO's Mandate Is Not What You Think: http://www.facebook.com/l/WAQFPNzAuAQFcQ7DJGPbmCz9u4gDryQDgL1fRigaQkLvJqg/alexandramorton.typepad.com/alexandra_morton/2014/04/ottawa-what-they-do-not-what-they-say.html. The above actions of the Harper government pose a real threat to Aboriginal fisheries, raising "a duty to consult" with River First Nations.

Solution: In response to this, we need to mobilize First Nations all along the river to pressure the federal government to stop its assault on Fraser River wild salmon and its habitat. Measures to accomplish this would include implementing the Cohen Commission recommendations, supporting the First Nations Wild Salmon Alliance, supporting the Fraser River Declaration, endorsing the Net-Pen Farmed Salmon Boycott and supporting a regulated closed containment, land-based Atlantic salmon aquaculture, away from Fraser River wild salmon migration routes. Support the call for a full, international investigation into Canada's failure to protect wild salmon from industrial fish farms.

Guiding Values and Principles

We need a radical revolution founded on values of respect for natural laws, cooperation with nature, a spiritual connection that honors our inter-connectedness and sharing both the benefits of what our environment bestows upon us, and responsibility to give back by protecting and preserving clean water, air and land. We must, if we are to survive, balance this giving and taking.

Don't take from nature more than you need.

Consume less, buy local

We must no longer use the atmosphere as a free waste dump.

We can't ravage the earth and have no consequences

Centralized power in the hands of corporations must be decentralized through regulations that protect both the environment and the life within it, including human beings.

There are limits to earth's ability to absorb pollution. There are boundary limits we cross at our own peril.

We need a reciprocal relationship with nature.

Ecosystems know how to self-regulate, corporations don't.

It is we humans who are weak, fragile and vulnerable and the earth is hearty and powerful.

Condense intent into actions that foster peace and prosperity for all.

Avoid greed, materialism and aggression like a poisoned well.

Hold the moral high ground and graciously serve your ideals to benefit the greater good of all.

We need to value clean water over fossil fuels that belong in the ground.

Embrace a world-view based on regeneration and renewal rather than domination and depletion.

Movements of people have to step into any leadership vacuum to take a responsible direction to reducing catastrophic climate warming.

Foster and support a political will to enforce environmental protection regulations, eliminate subsidies to fossil fuel companies/corporations, and subsidize renewable clean energy industries.

Keep climate warming gases out of our shared atmosphere.

As wild salmon go, so do we!"