



## A mutually caring relationship: An aboriginal perspective

Based on an interview with Frances Sanderson

All of creation helps us to survive—the rocks, the plants, the animals, the birds, the water—everything is part of our safety net. The Creator gave us these things to look after us and so we see the Creator in all things. All are signs that the Creator is present.

Look at a sunset, or a rainbow, or a river, or a child learning to walk, or a bird learning to fly. All these things speak of God as loving, giving, creative, inspiring.

The Creator shows us how to look after each other, how to look after all living things. We are the caretakers. It is when people become greedy that we lose our land, our parks, our villages. We lose birds, trees, what we need for food, for beauty and for clean air. All these things are lost because people want more. Greed is why we lose races of people; why there are wars.

Problems also arise when people put themselves above the rest of creation. They forget, for instance, that the trees are there to help us, providing shade, oxygen, wood for shelter and fuel for heat. The trees are not there for us to ravage for financial profit.

There is an old aboriginal prophecy from our elders—the seventh generation prophecy—that says you are to worry about seven generations into the future because seven generations ago our ancestors worried about us.

It is our obligation to ensure that there will be clean air and water, plant and animal life, and a place of solitude, tranquility

and peace for future generations.

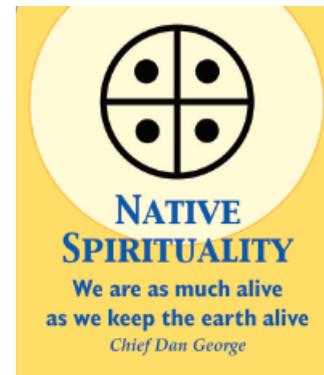
In quieter, simpler times, all we had to worry about was that we planted our crops properly so that the next generation would have food and learn how to farm. Today, we have many more ecological concerns.

Aboriginal spirituality teaches that you look after what the Creator has given you and those things will look after you. It's a symbiotic relationship. You look after the land so that the land will produce for you. You look after the water so that you will have water to drink and water to feed the plants and animals. It is mutually caring.

As an aboriginal person, I celebrate my faith from the time I get up in the morning until the time I go to bed at night. In the mornings we offer the Creator our thanks for the new day and ask the Creator to watch over us. We also call on our Grandfather Sun and Grandmother Moon, as well as all our little sisters, the stars, to watch over us.

There are also ceremonies in which we speak to the trees, to the plants, to the water, and we tell them that we are aware of the roles that each of them has been given—the birds that come in the spring to tell us it is time to start planting, to start getting the ground ready. We talk to Mother Earth. She knows when to wake up and start the flowers growing again. They all know their job.

Human beings are the only ones who don't know their job. As a species, we take years to

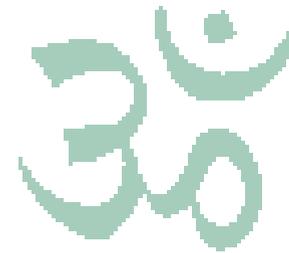


learn how to look after ourselves. Yet, a flower knows when to go to seed, when to bloom, when to go to sleep for the winter, without being told. Creation teaches us.

Aboriginal spirituality is an oral tradition and does not have sacred writings. In our culture we remember what has to be done, we remember how to live properly. We bring respect for everything that we have, that has been given to us. You would not accept a gift from someone and then throw it away. The trees are a gift, water is a gift, the birds are a gift.

People have to change their way of thinking, especially people in industry and government. No matter what our religion or our belief, we have to live our faith every day of our lives. Being spiritual is something you do, not because you have to do it. With good teaching, the spiritual journey changes from being an obligation to a passion.∞

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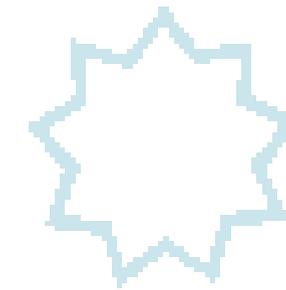
### Hinduism

*"I pervade the Universe. All objects in the Universe rest on me as pearls on the thread of a garland."*  
*(Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita)*

The Hindu view of Earth and environment emerges from the Vedic voice (ancient Hindu teachings). The cosmos is the divine body of the Divine spirit. The galaxies, solar systems, planets, all life including humanity—all these are sub-systems of the cosmos. The human being is just a cell in the divine body. And the whole is greater than the aggregate of its parts...

The Earth and the environment are not given to us as our property for possession, use and exploitation. We and our environment are one. We are interdependent and sustain each other. We must give back to nature whatever we take from the environment. Let us not in our greed and pride try to conquer, rule and exploit nature. Exploitation is sin, and the wages of sin is death. Let us all live together and grow: this is the voice of hope."

*(Dr. Tulsi Ram Sharma, Hindu teacher)*



### Baha'i

The world reflects the qualities and attributes of God, and should therefore be greatly respected and cherished. Baha'i Scriptures describe nature as an emanation of God's will: "Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world" (*Tablets of Baha'u'llah*, p. 142)

Baha'u'llah enjoins His followers to develop a sense of world citizenship and a commitment to stewardship of the Earth. His writings are imbued with a deep respect for the interconnectedness of all things...

Among the principles guiding the Baha'i approach to conservation and sustainable development, the following are of particular importance:

- Nature reflects the qualities and attributes of God and should, therefore, be greatly respected and cherished.
- All things are interconnected and flourish according to the law of reciprocity.
- The oneness of humanity is the fundamental spiritual and social truth shaping our age.
- Nature reflects the qualities and attributes of God.

*Taken from ARC: Alliance of Religions and Conservation, [www.arcworld.org](http://www.arcworld.org)*



### Jain prayer of forgiveness

*I grant forgiveness to all living beings  
And all living beings grant forgiveness to me  
My friendship is with all living things  
My enmity is non-existent*

### Jainism

**NONVIOLENCE (Ahimsa):** Non-violence is the fundamental vow and runs through the Jain tradition like a golden thread. It involves the avoidance of violence in any form through word or deed, not only to human beings but also to all nature. It means reverence for life in every form including plants and animals. Jains practice the principle of compassion for all living beings (Jiva-daya) at every step in daily life. Jains are vegetarians...

**COMPASSION:** This is the positive aspect of non-violence: to practice an attitude of compassion towards all life. Jains pray that forgiveness and friendliness may reign throughout the world and that all living beings may cherish each other.

**INTERDEPENDENCE:** This ancient Jain principle teaches that all of nature is bound together, and says that if one does not care for nature one does not care for oneself.

**SELF-RESTRAINT:** An important Jain principle is not to waste the gifts of nature, and even to reduce one's needs as far as possible. As Gandhi said, "There is enough in this world for human needs, but not for human wants."

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