

EARTH DAY



To The Portland Observer Readers:

"Thank you for this opportunity to discuss our environment and what I think Earth Day means."



Governor John Kitzhaber

There has been no issue in Oregon in the last decade that has been as divisive and contentious as how to treat Oregon's environment. It has pitted urban against rural, environmentalist against timber worker.

And, unfortunately, the debate which has really been more of a shouting match has failed to recognize the essential purpose and meaning of Earth Day: the Earth is our only home and regardless of where we live or how we earn our money, we share

common cause in keeping our place a healthy one in which to live.

Until we all recognize this common purpose, the environment will remain a battle field of short-term interests instead of what it truly is: a shared responsibility.

There is one other idea I would like you all to think about in relation to Earth Day and environmentalism: there are no bad people - only bad practices.

By that I mean that we often rush to vilify people on the basis of their environmental practices. All this does is polarize us as a state and make it that much more difficult to hold a meaningful conversation about our environment.

Instead, we should acknowledge people with whom we disagree, show them respect and then, if we find fault with their practices try and persuade them to change.

Finally, I believe that if each

of us does our part to protect and preserve our environment, no one's burden will be too heavy to bear. And the rewards will belong to us all.

As people lucky enough to live in this beautiful state, you can manage your life in a way that minimizes adverse impacts on the environment.

If you live by a stream, allow the vegetation to grow beside it. Reduce erosion. Reduce your use of yard fertilizers and pesticides.

Recycle. Conserve water. Conserve energy. Reduce waste.

So, as we honor another Earth day, I would ask you to simply remember that our environment should be our common cause and that we can only make it so if we show respect and acknowledgment for everyone in our community.

Governor John Kitzhaber

A NATIVE ELDER'S EARTH & SPIRIT-BASED PRISON PROGRAM

BY TOM ATLEE

Manitonquat (an Indian elder of the Assonet band of the Wampanoag Nation) emphasizes that what he does is not religious, although anyone from any religion may participate.

Remindful of the Earth and "all our relations." One of the great losses of our materialist-industrial culture is that most of us just go about our business without any sense of being situated within the natural aliveness of our world.

Manitonquat puts things back into context by inviting everyone in his program, each time, to greet "our common mother, the Earth. Then we greet her children, that big family of Mother Earth, those that put down roots into her, those that crawl under her skin, those that swim in her waters, and those that fly on her winds. Each has a different gift that they bring to the web of life, which depends on all these gifts. Therefore we also send our thanksgiving to these relatives all over the Earth."

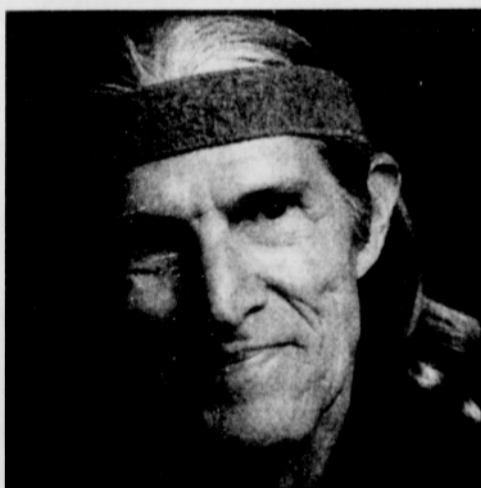
"The web of life" of each ecosystem, each living community and, ultimately, our planetary biosphere. There is comfort and power in coming home to the fact that we are part of this living community. Especially if we are locked away in some punitive fortress of stone and metal.

People in prison know about respect, if only by its absence. Another native elder with whom Manitonquat has worked, Slow Turtle, tells the prisoners: "You are special. Each one of you has an important place in the Creation. Each one of you has special and unique gifts. No one was ever like you in all the universe, and there will never be another one like you again. Therefore only you have your special gift, and you are the only one who can give it away. The rest of us need to receive your gift and hear your story."

Our people noticed long ago that the circle is the basic form of Creation. How starkly this contrasts with the rows, lines, boxes, and hierarchies - what Manitonquat calls "pyramids of domination" of Western mechanistic thought and culture.

The order of speaking in a talking circle is determined by a special object, usually a "talking stick," which is passed around the circle. An elder speaks first. When someone holds the

stick they speak for as long as they wish. "Everyone else will listen and give the speaker his attention and respect. No one will interrupt, and no one will argue with a previous speaker, or with any other individual. You respect him by listening and keeping your mind open to hear his words, as



Manitonquat

well as to feel his heart and what lies between the words.

"Each man holding the stick is asked only to be honest. It's so simple, yet so profound, and its effect is so powerful. Most of these men have never in their lives been listened to with respect. For

them to hold the talking stick and feel respect, supportive attention, is a really powerful, liberating experience.

"As the stick progresses, others who have been touched open their hearts, old wounds open, and tears flow that heal them. At the end of the circle the bonds, understanding, safety, and trust have grown. The circle is stronger." The prisoners frequently express deep gratitude that they are "treating each other like human beings" in the circle. For once, they aren't dehumanizing themselves or others. And no one is humiliating them.

In a Native American sweat lodge, people sit together in total darkness in a low domed structure made of "saplings set in the ground in a circle and bent over and tied to each other in pairs" and then covered with blankets and canvas. Pouring water over red-hot stones in a central pit creates the steam.

Other than this, the specifics of the ritual differ considerably from one native culture to another. But the intention is shared:

"Most of the teachings which we have been given concerning this ritual

CONTINUED TO PAGE B8

Join the Portland Audobon Society!



For the past 95 years Portland Audobon Society has promoted understanding, enjoyment and preservation of the natural world, especially wildlife and its habitat.

Whether it's in a majestic old growth forest, an urban natural area, or your local public school, Portland Audobon Society's focus is to bring people together to celebrate the diversity of nature.

Come visit us! We have something to interest everyone!

To learn about volunteer and membership opportunities, please call Darlene Philpott, Volunteer Coordinator, at 292-6855 X104; email: dphilpott@audobon-pdx.org.

Portland Audobon Society
5151 NW Cornell Road
Portland, OR 97210

HOW TO TAKE A WALK

By JAMES THORNTON

A walk is a chance to imbibe Nature's wisdom. It becomes meditation when we walk slowly, concentrating on our breath, feeling our body move, feeling our feet in contact with the Earth. We can easily let ourselves open, and be permeated by this wisdom. It happens in our bodies.

Walk in slow motion. As you walk, do your feet touch the Earth, or does the Earth rise to meet your feet?

Become aware of all the life around you: the compact, concentrated life of insects, flowers, and birds. When you come to an insect, to a tree, or to anything else, let your attention go out to it, while remaining aware of your awareness.

As you let yourself be open to the world of the other, you begin to get a sense of the strong true life it lives. Let your imagination go out to the life of the other. If a tree, to its patient growth, its feel for the Sun, the taste of water in its soil. If you are in contact with an ant, let yourself feel the life of that ant, and the life of its colony. Let yourself know the intelligence of the colony and the sense of belonging to it. Let yourself know what it is like to follow a trail of scent to a source of food, and bring back a piece of it for your sisters, a piece as large as yourself.

Get close to the inner life of the beings you meet. These

approaches, these closenings to what lives, might strike you as games. If games, they are profound ones.

As we let ourselves feel the lives of other organisms, we get into real contact with them, and with their perceptions. Their point of view opens to us and we can receive their teachings. We begin to sense our interconnection with them. We may begin by feeling how alien these other beings are. We end by having a sense of belonging to the same family. We feel less lonely.

We begin to know that our own everyday mind is just one specialized form of mind, of which there are many others. When we let the soul come forward, these other forms of mind become more open to us. Knowing them, we are more at home.

When you have had contact with another mind for awhile, let yourself sense the time to move on. There is always a right time to move on, in everything we do. We often miss it. Let yourself sense it, thank the other sentient being, and move on.

INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION HURTS OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AND IT'S A SIN

"The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth." Isaiah 24:4-6

Join us in fighting for environmental justice.

For more information contact:

GREENCROSS
Good News for God's Creation

6308 NE 88th St
Vancouver, WA 98665
360-574-8230
gcnsw@compuserve.com

Metro Recycling Information 234-3000

Real people. Fast, helpful answers. Six days a week.



Call Metro Recycling Information when you need information about:

- recycling and reuse options
- garbage disposal
- ways to prevent waste
- composting and natural gardening
- safer alternatives for home and garden
- hazardous waste disposal

Metro Recycling Information is open 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Call us for a free refrigerator magnet so you'll always have our number handy.

Tip of the week: Free hazardous waste disposal

Clean unwanted hazardous household products off your shelves and bring them to one of Metro's free collection events this spring.

Call 234-3000 for more information.



Metro Regional Services
Creating livable communities

Metro is working to ensure that we have access to nature, clean air and water and resources for future generations. Waste prevention and safe disposal are ways you can create a more livable community.