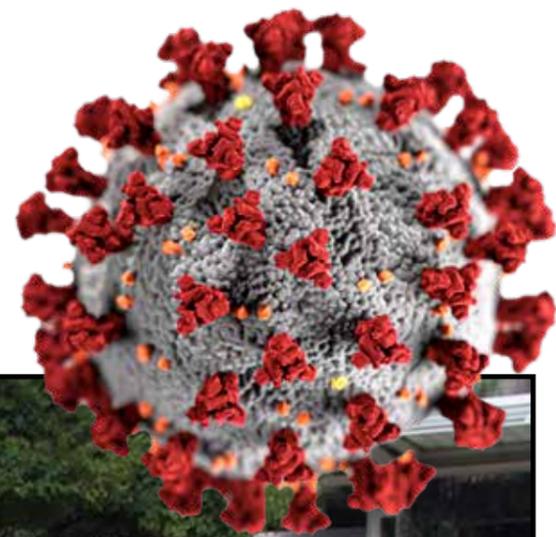
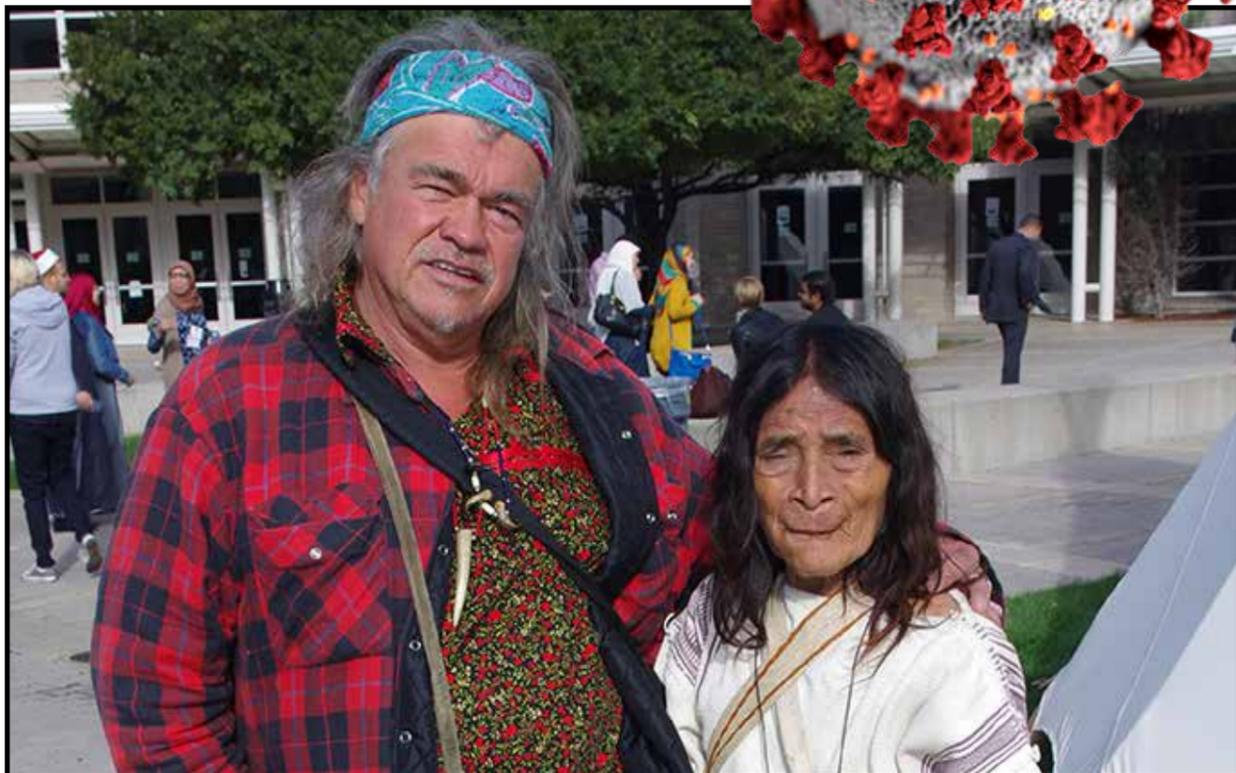


Virus Can Wake Us Up Before It Is Too Late



Our old elders never stop giving to us, so we learn how to give ourselves to others. Once we find our elders, our life changes forever with their wisdom. Their sharing and caring fills us up with a way of seeing what is real and sacred. The first big ceremonies were in Onondaga, New York, in 1990, the burial place of Handsome Lake, the Cayuga Shaman and Philosopher of The Iroquois Confederacy, who, in 1779, spoke out against alcohol, abuse and witchcraft. During a time of colonization the Six Nations of The Haudenosaunee Iroquois Six Nations Confederacy were going through terrible times of culture shock and deterioration of traditional values. Handsome Lake helped restore Haudenosaunee culture because he could see and understand the negativity that was killing his people long ago. Today some of our people are coming back to their culture and some are leaving their reservation life for big cities to find something they feel is missing in their life and homelands. Our old elders have tried to keep our way of life alive, but nothing has been easy for Native People in North America, Canada, Turtle Island.

We gather to honour the life-giving forces, as our late Elder Joe Medicine Crow from the great Crow Nation in Lodge Grass Montana would say: "When we go into the lodge to work with the sacred fire, earth, air and water to purify ourselves for our great Creator, we go to humble ourselves with Mother Earth and be in her sacred womb. We want to be with the elements that give us life and creation: earth, air, water and fire. We are made of the four elements that give us life, so we want to be close to these forces and honour them with our prayers. We Indian people want to be in our Mother Earth's womb because it is the place we came from. It is pure and clean inside. The sacred lodge is our purification place. We need to go in to be with our Mother Earth and work with the air, water and fire to give thanks to these forces that nurture all of creation." Joe Medicine Crow was 102 when he crossed over to the other side. We all miss Joe and love Joe for his gentleness and kindness to his native people. The beautiful thing I can say is that once I started to attend sacred councils with The Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth and American Indian Institute, my life turned into a world of meaning and spiritual foundation from the teachings and sharing that our grass-roots native elders gave to us who attended circles and councils. We cannot forget old Bob Staffanson, our friend who started this spiritual circle and created so much healing in a time when the Universe wanted to feel the power



Danny and Kogi Elder in Utah Ceremonies Parliament of Worlds Religion

and prayers of our elders.

Our old elders show us how to be happy in the sacred way. They move about because of a life with like-minded loving people who teach a ceremonial way of life, a life with respect for all life that is moving about on Sacred Mother Earth, sharing endlessly on how to be with Creation. The Kogi Tribe in Colombia are still trying to live off the land respecting Mother Earth in the mountains in Colombia. The television channel BBC have traveled to visit the Kogi over the years and now the Kogi are speaking out to the world, saying that the outsiders are out of balance with all life and Creation. The Kogi Tribe is no different than the Hopi Tribe documented by writer Thomas E. Mails in "The Hopi Survival Kit", or what Tom Porter of the Mohawk Nation says: "When we go into our Longhouse, I can hear the Lakota, I can hear the Ojibway and Cree because the teachings are pretty much the same. We are all children of Mother Earth and if we take care of Mother Earth she will take care of us."

Covid 19 is the cause of human ignorance or greed and if we humans, putting it simply, don't stop exploiting natural life, then natural life will stop taking care of us humans. The virus has given us Humans a chance to look at how fast a pace we are destroying Mother Earth with fossil fuels. Mother Earth can heal just by slowing down the fast pace of airports, cruise ships, oil tankers, logging, mining. Let society invest in solar energy, let's invest in electric cars, let's invest in organic farming, reforestation, recycling, investing in local food markets, let's invest in community housing for the poor and homeless, let's invest in cleaning our oceans now before there is nothing but death. We need to reforest the planet, we need local farming in every country. We humans can repair damage we have inflicted on Mother Earth.

This will create countless jobs, healing jobs, like bringing nature back to cities. There is a French journalist working for The Guardian Newspaper in the UK, George Monbiot, who believes that airlines and oil giants are on the brink of collapse and no governments should bail them out or give them a lifeline. He says: "What does a national defense mean in a world pandemic? That is no time to buy fighter jets. He adds: "The crisis is a chance to rebuild our economy for the good of humanity. Let's bail out the living world, not its destroyers! Covid 19 is nature's wake up call to complacent civilization."

All these things George Monbiot says are real and meaningful. It is the Western way of saying things our elders have been saying for 500 years since colonization, but at this point in time let's just talk about survival or finding a healthy, healing way of life to survive, because we as Human Beings must take this crisis as a warning or last warning! The way I see it is we need to do everything possible to ask Mother Earth to forgive us, or just give thanksgiving to her for all that she has given us and suffered from. With the ceremonies passed onto us from our ancestors there is hope even to our last breath, there is hope we will learn truth, the truth to be loving and kind and responsible to life, if we as native people, indigenous people of this country can pray together in unity, or as best as we can for thanksgiving and healing. That would be a start or a new beginning, if we could start organizing healing circles, Sacred Fires, healing councils, thanksgiving ceremonies within our communities and beyond. We need to bring back more Sweat Lodges and Pipe Ceremonies to honour Mother Earth: she is still listening. It can happen in every province or community, it can happen in cities through Band Offices or Assembly of First Nations or Traditional Gatherings, but we need to have ceremonies for the planet and

maybe others will follow our ways or initiative.

My brother Rick Hill from Six Nations Grand River Country says: “In 1779 four Sky Beings took Handsome Lake on a journey to see both what was going on among the Haudenosaunee and what could happen if we did not transform our behaviours and decolonize. Instead our people made a ritual out of our ceremonies and that became our culture - putting through ceremonies. The majority of our people do not do the things that we were instructed to do, for which the ceremonies would be a time of sharing and giving thanks for what we just experienced. In other words, we don’t walk the talk. Since 1799 we have continued to be further colonized, so that most of our people have not kept the heirloom seeds and know how to plant; most don’t know how to gather foods and medicines; most can’t fish or hunt; most don’t know how to cook food so that it doesn’t harm you. We are in a mess. The Four Sky Beings are disappointed in us. We have seen time and again what they revealed has come true. Instead we burn tyres to protest. When Chief Oren Lyons states that this is a time for value change, he doesn’t just mean white people. We have to change our personal values and get back in the fields, woods, streams and gardens. Then we can give thanks for what we experience in those sacred spaces. We have been instructed to consider the coming faces, the unborn generations of children, when we make decisions. We are asked to uphold some principles when we make our decisions. We should consider the consequences of our decisions upon the integrity of Mother Earth to ensure those future generations have a chance to enjoy the beauty and bounty offered by our mother. In Danny Beaton’s film “The Iroquois Speak Out For Mother Earth” (2002), John Mohawk challenged us to think very carefully about what we are doing, and the impact of our decisions on releasing carbon into the atmosphere. He was really challenging us to rethink our lifestyles. Can we live a bit more lightly? Can we adjust globally to what is taking place with ozone depletion and climate change? Things have changed dramatically since



Rick Hill Tuscarora Beaver Clan, Six Nations Iroquois Haudenosaunee Holding Sacred Wampum Belt

this interview was recorded with John. The seas are warming and the ice is melting. Hundreds if not thousands of species have disappeared. Now a pandemic illness stalks the globe, hunting down humans.

The Hopi talk about how people who have become so captivated by technology have forsaken their spiritual obligations. These Two-Hearted People have a divided morality, so what they invent, from atomic bombs, genetically-modified organism to manufactured viruses, threatens our very existence. This is not new knowledge. Rational minds understand this. Yet they persist to move toward darkness without a moral compass. We may have reached the tipping point, not the ecological tipping point, but the spiritual tipping point. No matter how many Indigenous ceremonies are out through, the damage is overwhelming, just like in the past when our medicines could not protect our peoples against smallpox and millions died. The Hopi believe that we have an obligation to help the Two-Hearted People recover their One-Heartedness, their sacred humanity to stop doing those things that hurt the Earth and hurt the chances of their grandchildren to live well. Economic Man, the Two-Hearted People who

put profits above humanity, may have already gone too far. The men of all races and nationalities who make the industrial, technological and financial decisions have to pause, not to figure out how they capitalize on the new normal, but to look into their heart and ask if what they are about to do may help promote future prospects of peace, of a sustainable world and of an opportunity for their great-grandchildren to live as the Creation intended. The future of humanity rests within Two-Hearted Minds. As John and the Hopis believe, there still is One Sacred Heart within each of us that shows us the way. I hope that it is true.”

Story and Photos by Danny Beaton Turtle Clan Mohawk | www.dannybeaton.ca | In Memory of Alicja Rozanska



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