

## CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 40

### **The Transition to Community Climate Change Cultures**

In the previous two chronicles I have used the analogy of the chrysalis experience to describe the need for transitions in dealing with a climate changing world.

Chronicle 38 introduced the three life stages of the chrysalis: the caterpillar cocoon stage, the imaginal cell stage, and the new butterfly stage. The major focus was on the cocoon that I described as a colonial cocoon protecting the economic and sometimes political systems designed to gorge themselves on Earth's resources.

Chronicle 39, on an Earth spirituality, used the same analogy but focused on a psychic/spiritual dimension. The imaginal cells arise to defeat the cells from the caterpillar's immune system and present a new vision of the future—a mutually enhancing relationship between our human species and Earth. Key to this stage is the awareness that we are earthlings, who have evolved through evolution and are members of a conscious universe.

In this Chronicle, I will use the chrysalis analogy again but focus on the third stage—the transition into the new life stage.

As the butterfly emerges from the cocoon we must emerge from our current Earth-damaging stage to a mutually enhancing relationship with Earth. In the process we must create a community culture. So why a culture and why at the community level?

We need a culture, a new way of seeing the world and giving it meaning. It includes knowledge, values, skills and relationships, especially our relationship as earthlings with a living Earth of which we are a part. A new culture because it can be passed on to our descendants to give them the resources to deal with the damaged Earth they are inheriting from us.

We need the culture at the community level for two reasons. First we can see from the results of the 2015 Climate Change COP 21 Paris Conference that most nations will not meet their commitments. And Donald Trump, the president of the greatest polluter on Earth walked away from COP 21. Other countries with new dictatorships are doing the same. Second, we can also see that the most successful efforts to deal with climate change around the world are occurring at the community level.

So how do we go about creating a climate change culture at the community level? I'm not sure. I've never created one. But I've worked in many indigenous community cultures. It seems that the following steps would be part of this effort.

First people must become aware of what is happening to the world in which they live. The changes will affect every aspect of their lives and those of their families and friends. The science is clear and ominous. But most of us aren't scientists. So we must break the science down into plain language and relate it to stories in people's lives and the lives of their families.

Second, we must help folks realize that what is happening "out there" is not just "out there". It is also happening within them. They are earthlings. Earth is their greater self. They have evolved from Earth through the process of evolution and, along with Earth, they are part of a conscious universe. This is the psychic/spiritual foundation that can drive action.

Third, community folks must understand why it is happening. The "why" is all about the economic systems—the neo liberal "continuous profits at all costs" systems that are causing the devastation. Often these economic systems are supported by political systems. We must help folks understand the nature of these systems. As someone once said, "Unless you can see *through* the systems, you will only see the systems." And, in the process of creating alternative living economic systems that can live within a living Earth, we must discover useable parts of existing systems. It's like the butterfly using the liquefied remains of the caterpillar to help it become a new reality with its new vision.

Fourth, we must help folks develop resilience for the struggle. They must realize that they are not working alone. Just as the imaginal cells came together as a community, they must work together as a community and create networks with people who share and support the same new vision. Communities all over the world are doing this.

So those are my suggestions. But there is a bit more to the chrysalis story.

Every year the Monarch butterflies migrate from Mexico up to southern Ontario and every year, when the weather gets cool, they migrate back down to Mexico. On their way to their nesting sites they stop in the same fields year after year. But here is the interesting part. The butterflies that return are the fourth generation, the great-great-great grandchildren of the butterfly that leaves Ontario. They have never made the trip before. Talk about passing on a culture. Amazing!

And also very sad. Milkweed is the only source of food for the Monarch butterflies. This plant is being eradicated in many areas of Ontario to make way for urban development. The Monarch's numbers are decreasing.