

COMOX VALLEY CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLES (7)

Resilience: A Community Earth-Spirit

In our last two chronicles we have discussed the first two “Rs”: our Relationship as earthlings with Earth and our Responsibility to help Earth heal. In this chronicle we deal with Resilience—the capacity to sustain our efforts and “bounce back (the meaning of “resilience”) by developing a Community Earth-Spirit.

While writing these chronicles I have been haunted by a line in Brandi Carlile’s song “The Eye”. *“You can dance in a hurricane but only if you’re standing in the eye.”*

Climate change is the mother all hurricanes. It is bringing about irreversible transformation in life on a global level. But it is not “natural.” It is man-made. And because we made it we can “un-make” it.

You get to the universal through the particular. In dealing with climate change we start at the community level and move up. We can identify three major causes of climate change affecting our community: the economy, the multinational energy corporations and governments.

We have an economy that is based upon market fundamentalism and measured by the GDP. It must continue to grow day after day, year after year—or it will die. It benefits the rich—the one percent. But it doesn’t “trickle down” to the middle class and poor. The gap is getting wider. Most significantly it sees Earth as an unlimited supply of natural resources. The economy is bouncing up against and in some cases surpassing what scientists refer to as the Limits to Growth—the boundaries beyond which we cannot go if we hope sustain life on earth.

The multi-national energy corporations are taking full advantage of this economy. They have legal status as persons, they have sophisticated technologies and integrated systems. They continually fight against environmental laws which they interpret as a violation of their personal freedom to make profits. They ensure their access to natural resources through international agreements that allow them to take legal action against anyone who tries to stop them. And they spend millions of dollars on lobbyists and at times make direct contributions to political parties to ensure continued access to resources. Their trump card (sorry about that) is the promise of jobs, most of which are temporary.

Political parties on the provincial and federal level are influenced in their decision-making by the high paid lobbyists and sometimes swayed by direct donations (for example through “pay- to-play” policies). They make promises in the election campaigns

and, once in power, they play Lucy with the football and move the goal posts. They try to convince us that their decisions are all in our best interests, but often they are not.

To be clear, we are not against all economies...only the ones that fail to balance profits against limited natural resources. We are not against all corporations... only the ones that deny their impact on climate change and work against all those who support environmental laws. We are not against all politicians...only the ones who fail to realize that we didn't elect them to give them power. We elected them to give us power.

It is clear that on our human journey in this climate changing world we have come to the end of the paved road. Ahead lays a rough trail without road signs. We can give up and turn back, letting the chips fall where they may, or we can continue down the trail and decide to act, even though we may not know what that action might be. So how can we proceed?

We can't go alone. We need to develop a Community Earth Spirit where folks come together to learn, support one another, share ideas, and develop ways of moving forward.

So what is a Community Earth Spirit?

It is an internal awareness that emerges when people draw upon their faith spiritualities or personal spiritualities. They experience an inner awareness, something they might call a grace, an energy source or a sudden, enduring inspiration.

How this happens is a mystery but we might explain it in terms of another mystery—love: the love and sacrifices spouses or partners make for one another, for their children and for elderly members of the family. It extends to a concern for the poor in the community including those with special needs. It is this kind of love we extend to Earth, its animals, our gardens, forests and land and all of their life forms. This is the source of our resilience.

With a community Earth Spirit we can learn to dance in the eye of the hurricane. This is happening in communities all over the world, many of which are in more difficult straits than we are. But we must always be aware that the hurricane can change directions and those of us dancing in the eye must change with it.