

# **Climate Change Chronicle 1**

## **About Our New Season of Chronicles**

Some years ago a woman asked Stephen Leacock, the Canadian writer and humourist, if writing was difficult. Leacock responded, “Madam, writing is not difficult. You simply jot down the ideas that occur to you. The writing is simplicity itself. It is ‘the occurring’ that is difficult.”

I thought at the beginning of this second season of chronicles I would outline the ideas that have occurred to me. This will give you an idea of where I have come from and where we will be going in this coming season.

Most of these chronicles have occurred from my reflections on two sources. First there are the insights of Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, Teilhard de Chardin and other New Cosmologists. Second are the insights from indigenous cultures: my three decades of experience living in the Arctic and working in Inuit and Dene communities.

These two sources have a common bond. They both require us humans to redefine our relationship with Earth.

## **DEFINING THE PROBLEM**

### **Climate Change Is Not the Problem**

Every day we hear more and more about the devastating impacts of climate change. But climate change is not the fundamental problem. It is the symptom of a much greater problem—our inability to redefine our relationship with this new Anthropocene (“man-made”) world. In our previous Cenozoic Era we sat back and watched Earth evolve itself. With our systems and wondrous technologies we have now taken over major control of the evolutionary process. In a word we are deciding how Earth will evolve. That is very scary.

### **About Our Economic, Political and Legal Systems**

Our problem is our systems. Our economic systems are based upon neo-liberalism—the need for corporations to make a continual profit and exploit the limited resources of Earth. Multinational Corporations are “persons” and there is a perception that it is unjust for anyone to limit their access to resources.

The political systems are linked to the economic systems that provide jobs. Political parties often depend upon corporate monies which help keep them in power.

The legal system is developed by political parties that often use their influence to ensure that legislation benefits corporations. When issues arise and go to court, even at the Supreme Court level, the judges usually make decisions in light of existing legislation.

## REDEFINING OUR ROLE

### The Move to Contextual Thinking

We need a different way of thinking about the world in which we now live. The Anthropocene is the Mother of all Contexts and it requires contextual thinking. We have to be able to see the relationship between parts. We will have a great deal more to say about thinking in contexts.

### Discovering We Are Earthlings

We tend to see ourselves as separate from Earth and from other species. I am “here”, the Earth is “out there.” But, our DNA evidence indicates that we are Earthlings—we have come from Earth and from other species. (see The New Yorker DNA [article](#) on our animal ancestors). This awareness helps create within us a sense of responsibility for Earth.

### Conversion to an Earth Psyche/Spirit

It occurred to me while learning about this new Anthropocene world that we need to experience some kind of “metanoia”. This is a biblical term that has been adopted by a number of management gurus. It refers to “repentance” or “a change of mind, heart and lifestyle”. Among many folks this metanoia leads to a new psyche/spirit or spirituality that helps Earth heal itself. But accepting this is a challenge. As Bartholomew, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople has noted, *“It is a long journey from the head to the heart; and it is an even longer journey from the heart to the hands.”*

## TOWARD A WAY FORWARD

### A Vision and Systems

There is no road map but there are some encouraging developments. Many people are developing new visions and systems. A couple of examples...

- Swimme and Berry have suggested that we are experiencing irreversible transformations and we need new vision. They suggest developing an Ecozoic Era. Its defining characteristic is *“a mutually enhancing relationship between our species and Earth.”*
- In terms of a legal system Berry has introduced an Earth Jurisprudence, a system based on the rights of nature.
- Kate Raworth has suggested the need for a Doughnut Economy based upon a new relationship with Earth.
- Marjorie Kelly, speaking about a generative economy, asks the question *“What kind of living economy do we need to live within a living Earth?”*

## **Transitions and Community Cultures**

We must make the transition to a different kind of world. To do this we need to develop alternatives and get involved in triage work—using the elements we have that are compatible with a new viable world and abandoning the rest.

Finally, we can't wait for corporations and governments to take the initiative on these innovations. We must take the lead in our communities. Given that this challenge will be with us for many generations it seems that we need to develop supportive family-based community cultures. This is happening in communities around the world.

This season's chronicles will take us on an interesting and challenging journey—but it will be difficult. We will experience blow-back from powerful forces. We must continually adapt and be on the move. But we can survive. As Brandy Carlile has noted in her song "The Eye"—"*You can dance in a hurricane, only if you're standing in The Eye*".

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