

Tribal Memory: Responsibilities to the Land

Contributed by Jay Schuster
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(revised at Equinox gathering April 1999)

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We have the paramount responsibility to prevent the collapse of natural systems that may occur when we radically alter the land.

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We have the responsibility to know what the natural features of the land are.

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We have the responsibility to fully explore and come to terms with our motivation for seeking to change the land.

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We have the responsibility to completely research the implications of any changes that might result from developments we undertake on the land, to the best of our ability. This includes not only understanding fully that we may be causing, for example, erosion, but also that the erosion will affect the natural community, which will then have far reaching implications for the wildlife, our human neighbors, etc.

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If we do cause unforeseen problems, such as erosion, we have the responsibility to fix the problems promptly.

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We have the responsibility to understand our land in the context of the land around us. We may have on our land features that are rare elsewhere; if this is so, our responsibility does not end at the boundaries of our land, but extends to the entire community of that rare feature (for example, if we find an endangered species, we are responsible for managing the environment of those individuals in a manner that safeguards the entire species. This basically means that we are committed to at least following state and federal protection guidelines, and more fully protecting rare species if we have the resources to do so.)

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We have the responsibility to stop a development project if it becomes obvious that the results will cause erosion, adversely impact a sensitive species, undermine the ecosystem, or some equally serious problem. (for example, if after much research we finally agree on a building site but then discover that when spring comes around, the site contains the only

vernal pool on the property, we accept that we must change our plans if they would destroy an irreplaceable natural feature like the vernal pool. The project is stopped until the land use planit solves problem or brings it to the larger community for review, even if this will incur additional expense and/or hassle for us.)