

*CROWN OF THE
CONTINENT: A
SELF-REFLECTION*

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BY

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DO PRESENT
CONSERVATION
IDEAS LEAD US
TO
SUSTAINABILITY?

REFLECTIONS BY
A BLACKFOOT

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BLACKFOOT AND THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT

- THOUSANDS OF GENERATIONS HAVE COME AND GONE IN WHAT IS KNOWN AS BLACKFOOT TERRITORY. THOSE THOUSANDS OF GENERATIONS BACK MAY WELL HAVE BEEN THE CLOVIS PEOPLE THAT ARCHEOLOGISTS REFER TO WHEN REFERRING TO THE FIRST HUMANS IN THE AMERICAS THAT LIVIED WITHIN THE 'ICE FREE CORRIDOR. THE CLOVIS PEOPLE MAY HAVE BEEN THE ANCESTORS OF THE BLACKFOOT. IN OTHERS, WE HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR A LONG TIME IN WHAT IS NOW REFER TO AS 'CROWN OF THE CONTINENT'.
- OUR VERY BEING AS BLACKFOOT IS RELATED TO THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA COVERED BY THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT.



BLACKFOOT AND THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT

- WITHIN THAT TERRITORY, THE MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF THE BLACKFOOT, ANIMALS, PLANT LIFE, THE LAND, AND THE COSMOS HAS RESULTED IN THE LIFE-WAYS OF THE BLACKFOOT.
- TO A GREAT EXTENT, THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT OWES ITS CONTINUING NEAR PRISTINE EXISTENCE DUE TO THOSE CULTURES THAT GO BACK TO THE LAST ICE AGE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CONTINENTAL DEVIDE.

THEN A
NEW
BREED OF
HOMO
SAPIENS
APPEARED
ON THE
SCENE

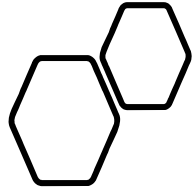
- IN MODERN TIMES, SCIENTISTS, FROM MANY DIFFERENT FIELDS, REFER TO THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT AS THE MOST INTACT ECOSYSTEM IN THE WORLD. BUT COUNTRY, STATE, PROVINCIAL, AND INDIVIDUAL OWNERSHIP BOUNDARIES CRISS CROSS WHAT USED TO BE A WHOLISTIC AND INTACT ECOSYSTEM.



THE RECKONING

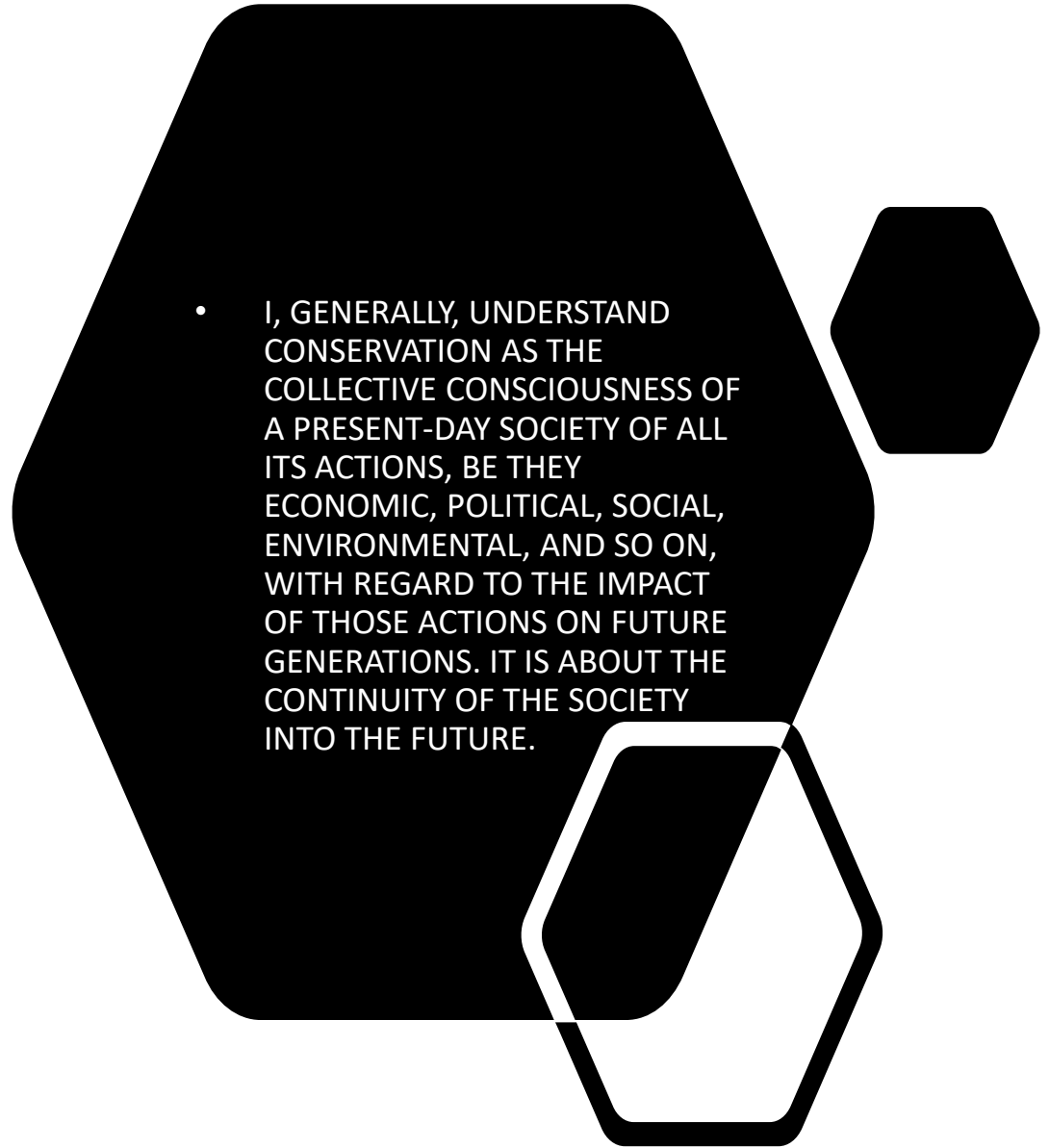
WE ALL REALIZE, RATHER BELATEDLY,
THAT WE, AS HUMANS, ARE THE THREAT,
TO THE CONTINUITY OF THE ECO-SYSTEM
WITHIN THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT.

IF ONE CAN USE THE 'BUFFALO TREATY'
AS AN EXAMPLE, THE ELDERS SAID, "THE
BUFFALO SPIRIT NEVER LEFT US; IT IS 'US'
THAT LEFT THE BUFFALO". THIS MEANS
WE SHOULD NOT WORRY TOO MUCH
ABOUT THE CROWN OF THE CONTINENT,
WE SHOULD BE LOOKING AT OURSELVES.
WHAT IS OUR ECOLOGICAL ROLE?

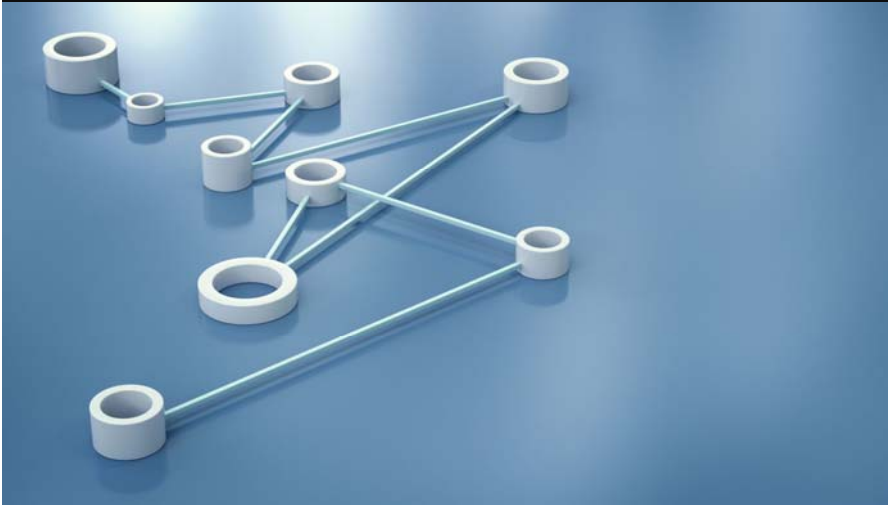


WHAT IS CONSERVATION?

- I, GENERALLY, UNDERSTAND CONSERVATION AS THE COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS OF A PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY OF ALL ITS ACTIONS, BE THEY ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SO ON, WITH REGARD TO THE IMPACT OF THOSE ACTIONS ON FUTURE GENERATIONS. IT IS ABOUT THE CONTINUITY OF THE SOCIETY INTO THE FUTURE.



WHY WE DO THINGS THE WAY WE DO



- METAPHYSICS ARE OUR TOOLS FOR REALITY STRUCTURING. ALL SOCIETIES, AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, CLAIM A TERRITORY. WITHIN THAT TERRITORY, THROUGH THE TOTALITY OF THEIR RELATIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENT, COME UP WITH AN INTERPRETIVE TEMPLATE AS TO HOW TO STRUCTURE REALITY, RESULTING IN LIFE-WAYS WE CALL CUSTOMS.
-

METAPHYSICS
AND
CONSERVATION

ALONG WITH CUSTOMS
COME SOCIAL VALUES. THEY
ACT AS GOALS TO REACH FOR
AND AS STANDARDS FOR
NORMS.



METAPHYSICS, CUSTOMS,
AND VALUES ARE ALL
CLOSELY RELATED AND ALL
HAVE IMPLICATIONS AND
RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE
NOTIONS OF CONSERVATION.

WESTERN METAPHYSICAL PARADIGMS

PERCEPTUAL STAGNATION: 'This is the way God made it...His work is perfect'

EXISTENCE CONSISTS OF MATTER: Space is a place for material objects that humans can sense

MOST EVERYTHING IN THE COSMOS IS INANIMATE EXCEPT HUMANS & ANIMALS

TO COME TO KNOW WE MUST ISOLATE



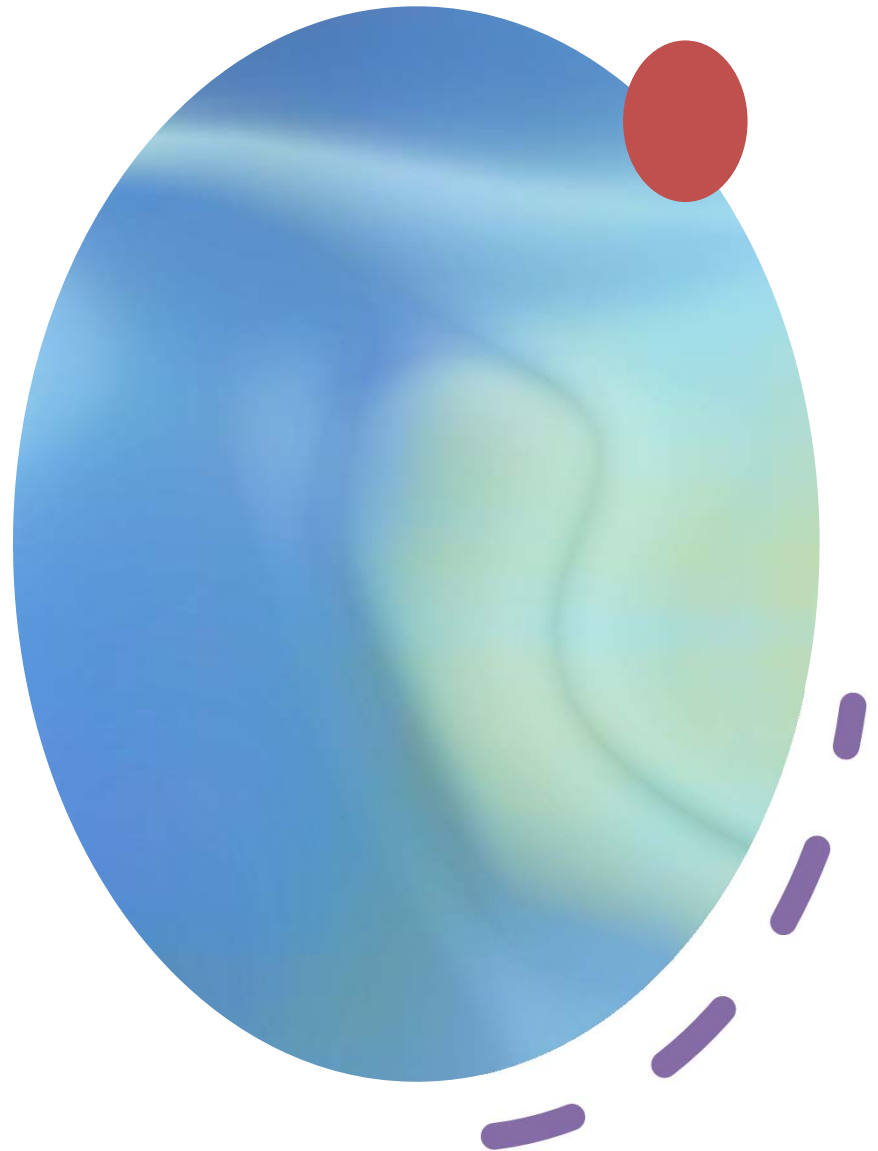
WESTERN METAPHYSICAL PARADIGMS

ONCE KNOWN, ONE CAN MOVE ON:
'Been there, done did it'

MAIN REFERENCE POINT IS 'TIME'.

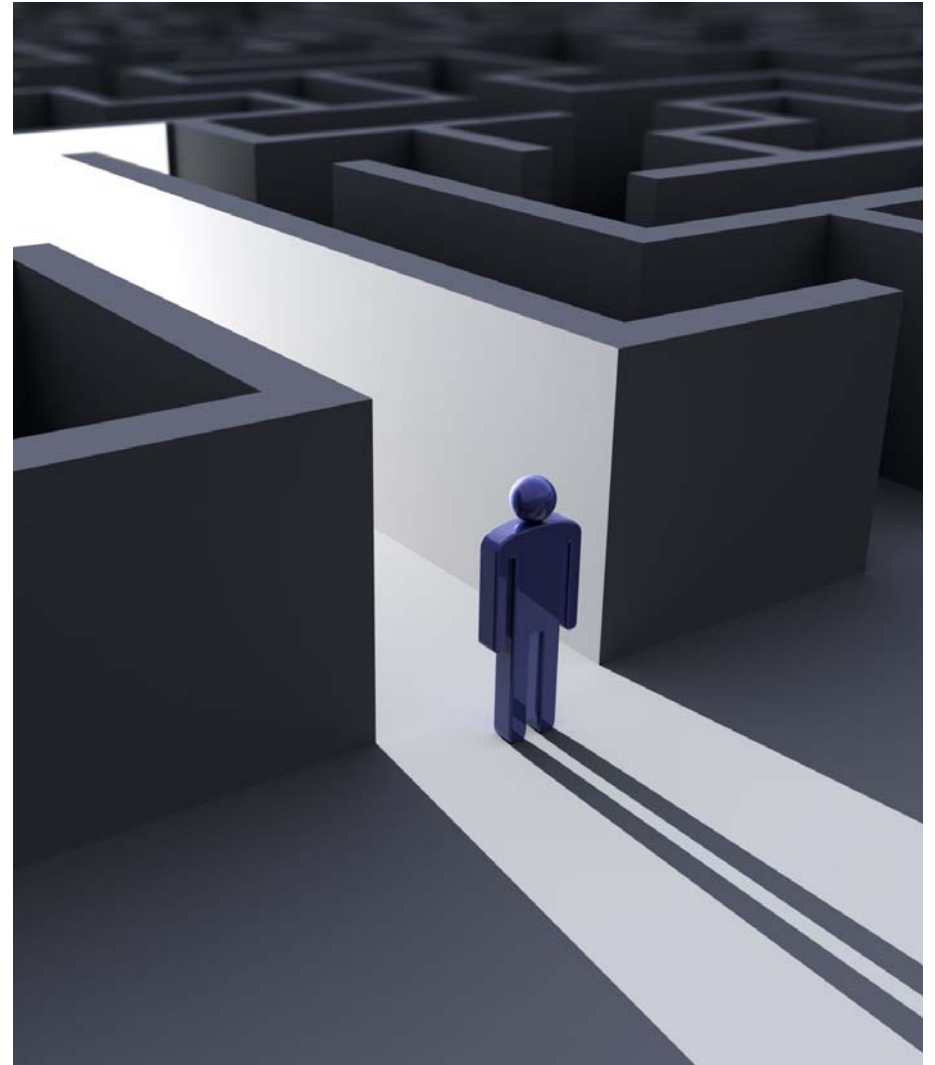
SOCIAL VALUE RAMIFICATIONS: Bigger,
faster, newer, higher, singularity, linearity

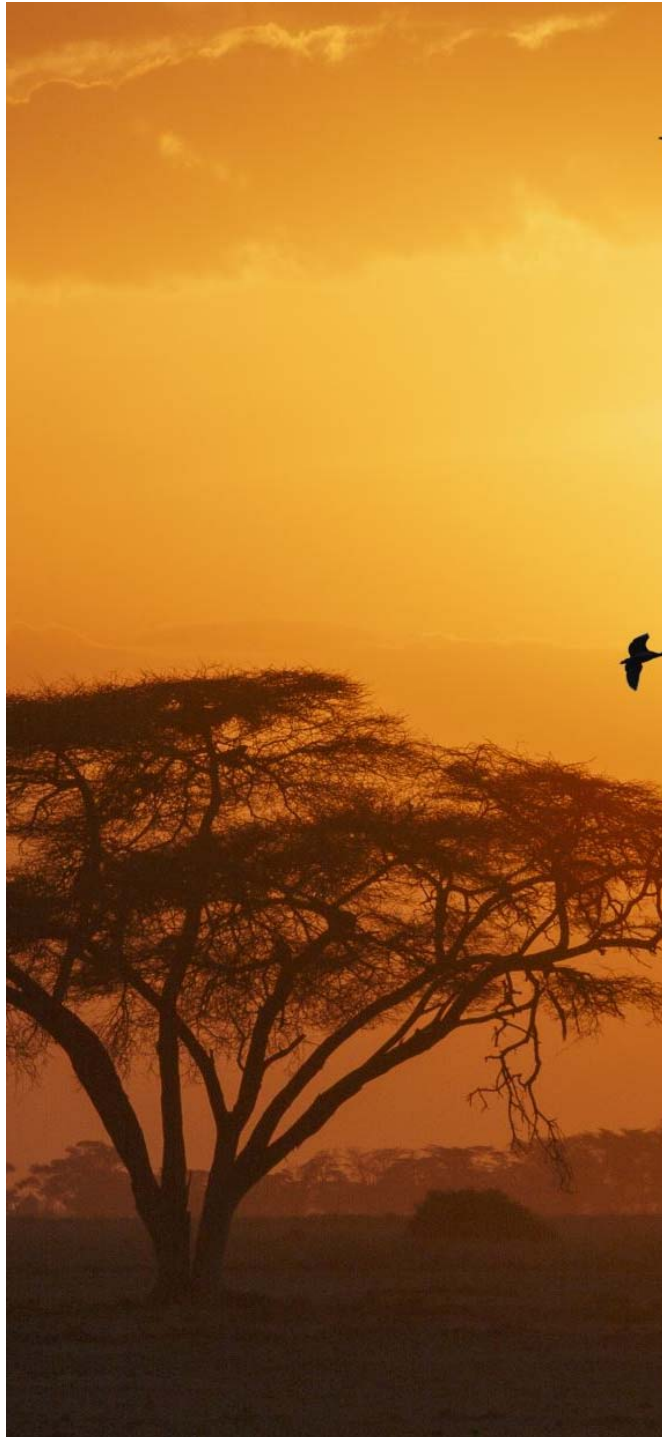
A PRODUCT OF WESTERN PARADIGMS IS
THE ENLIGHTENMENT ERA OR AGE OF
REASON



THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN THE AGE OF REASON

- MYSTICISM, MIRACLES, GHOSTS, AND THE LIKE WERE FROWNED UPON.
- MEASUREMENT AND, HENCE, THE ROLE OF MATHEMATICS BECAME THE FOUNDATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD.
- EXPERIMENTATION AND PURE REASON CAN BRING ABOUT KNOWLEDGE. FOR INSTANCE, THE HIGGS PARTICLE. THE SCIENTISTS SAY, 'THROUGH OUR REASONING (FORMULA) THE HIGGS PARTICLE SHOULD BE OCCUPYING THIS SPACE AND IT'S WEIGHT SHOULD BE THIS'.
- THERE IS NO ROOM FOR ANYTHING THAT CANNOT BE MEASURED AND EVERYTHING IS PROPOSITIONAL.





APPLICATION OF WESTERN THOUGHT TO CONSERVATION

- We are talking about ECOLOGICAL conservation: there are other types of conservations.
- Ecological conservation speaks to balancing ecosystems, wildlife populations, be they at risk or not, biodiversity of the landscape, whether for research or enjoyment. In other words, a utilitarian perspective. WE NEVER INCLUDE OURSELVES IN THE PICTURE.
- A utilitarian perspective usually looks at everything from the greatest happiness it will bring to mankind. It never looks at things from the benefit it might bring to the land or the animals, or the plant life.
- But a PROBLEM arises.....



APPLICATION OF WESTERN THOUGHT TO CONSERVATION

- The PROBLEM is mainly a linguistic problem. English, like other Euro-languages, is very good at categorizations. So we have a whole bunch of different types of conservations: here is a partial listing found in an article online: conservation biology, conservation law, conservation movement, energy conservation, marine conservation, habitat conservation, conservation science, soil conservation, water conservation, wetland conservation, wildlife conservation, wildlife management, and the list goes on. And each of them work in their own silo.

BLACKFOOT PARADIGM

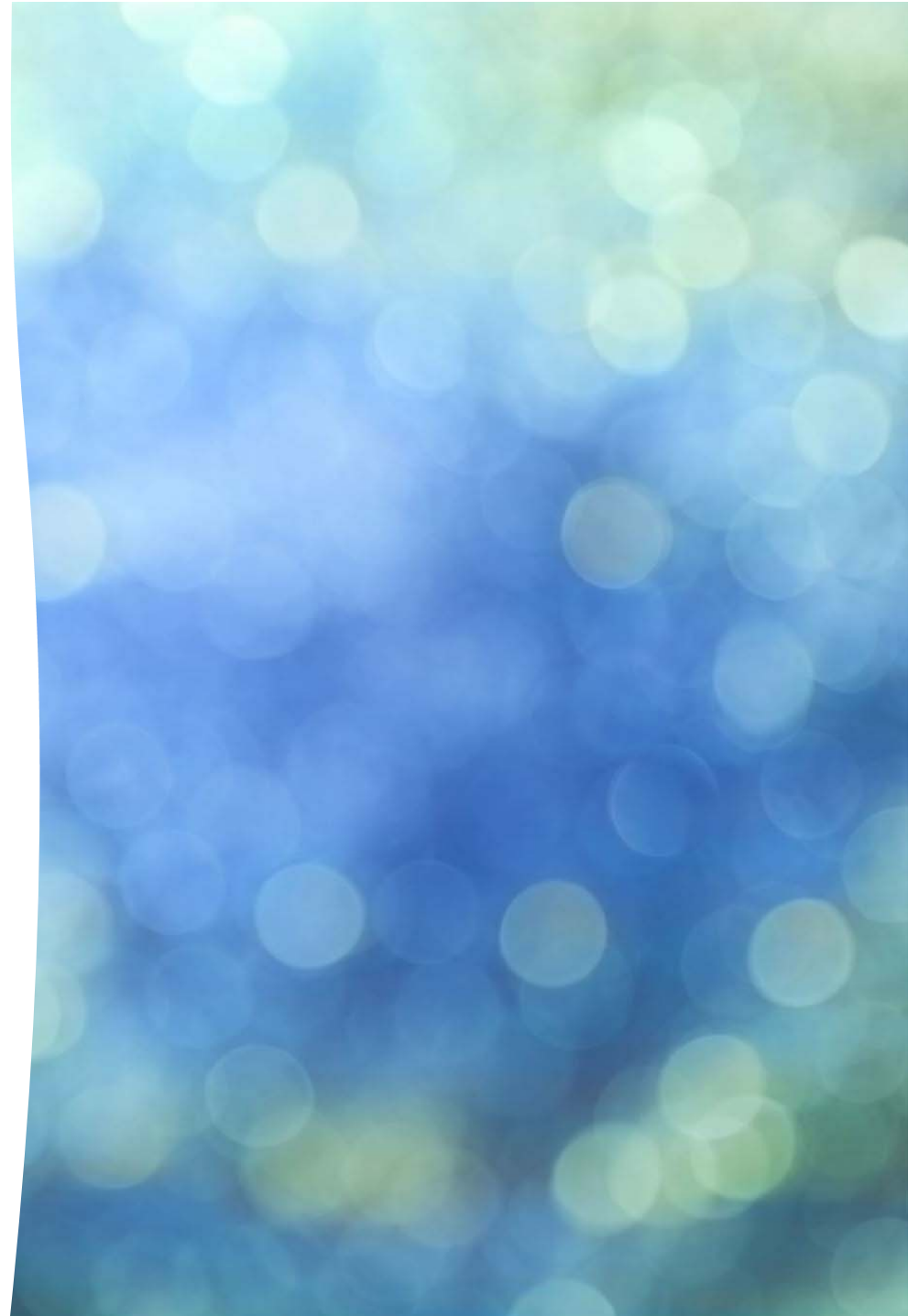
- BLACKFOOT METAPHYSICS INCLUDE NOTIONS OF FLUX(EVERYTHING EVERYTHING IS FOREVER IN MOTION), EXISTENCE CONSISTS OF ENERGY WAVES (AS OPPOSED TO MATTER), EVERYTHING IS ANIMATE, EXISTENCE IS A WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS, RENEWAL AND MAINTENANCE OF THOSE CONDITIONS AND FACTORS THAT MAKE FOR THE PRESENT REALITY AND WITHOUT WHICH HUMANS CANNOT SURVIVE AS A SPECIES, SUSTAINING THE LAND UPON WHICH THE PRESENT HUMAN REALITY DEPENDS ON, AND LANGUAGE, LASTLY, ACTS AS A REPOSITORY FOR THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ARISES OUT OF THOSE METAPHYSICS.



APPLICATION OF BLACKFOOT METAPHYSICS TO CONSERVATION

All of existence is animate. It is about 'all my relations'. I need 'all my relatives', and they need me. It is all about reciprocity

Existence is a web of relationships: what you do to the land, to the animals, to the water, you do to yourself. If you respect your relatives, they will respect you. It is all about good relationships.



APPLICATION OF BLACKFOOT METAPHYSICS TO CONSERVATION

- How are some of these relationships established?
- Focus on cultural keystone species such as the Buffalo. The Buffalo is an eco-engineer and a sustenance provider. Our songs, our stories, and our ceremonies are very closely related to the Buffalo. Through its eco-engineering of the landscape the Buffalo has taught us many lessons about the land, plants, and other animals.
- Learning our spiritual responsibility to the eco-system. That responsibility includes learning about plant and animal communities, and their lifeways. We talk and sing to them. They teach us songs. Many ceremonies are specific to places, to animals, and to plants.



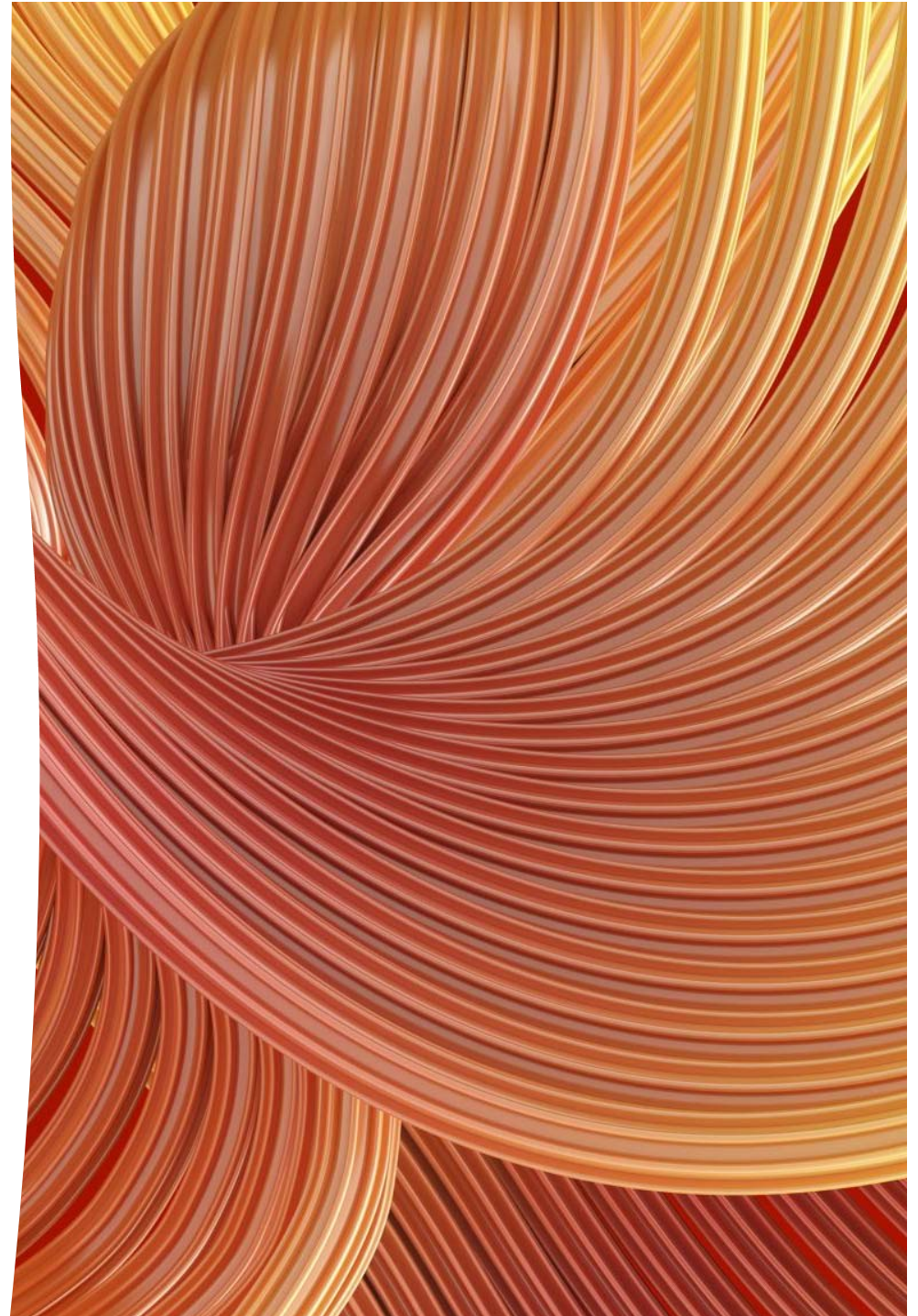
APPLICATION OF BLACKFOOT METAPHYSICS TO CONSERVATION

The concept is 'what you do to the eco-system you do to yourself'. The reciprocity approach to conservation results in continuity and/or restoration of your culture, language, lifeways, and so on.

When I cannot hunt or fish, a little bit of me disappears.

When I cannot conduct my ceremonies at certain places, a little bit of me disappears.

In other words, I AM THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT IS ME!





THE THREE SISTERS: AN EXAMPLE OF CONSERVATION

CORN, BEANS, AND SQUASH: They compliment each other-corn provides the climbing pole for beans; beans bring nitrogen, squash provides a protective cover to hold in the moisture. In other words, relationships are important.

The 3 Sisters are not just about providing food for humans, they are about replenishing mother earth and ecological balance.

NATIVE THOUGHT AND SUSTAINABILITY

- OUR PEOPLE, OUR ELDERS ALWAYS REMIND US ABOUT THINKING OF OUR CHILDREN 7 GENERATIONS INTO THE FUTURE. A GENERATION, IN TERMS OF TIME, IS ABOUT 30 YEARS. SO, WE ARE TALKING 210 YEARS. IN OTHER WORDS, HOW IS WHAT WE DO TODAY GOING TO AFFECT OUR CHILDREN 210 YEARS FROM NOW? NOW, THAT IS 'CONSERVATION'!

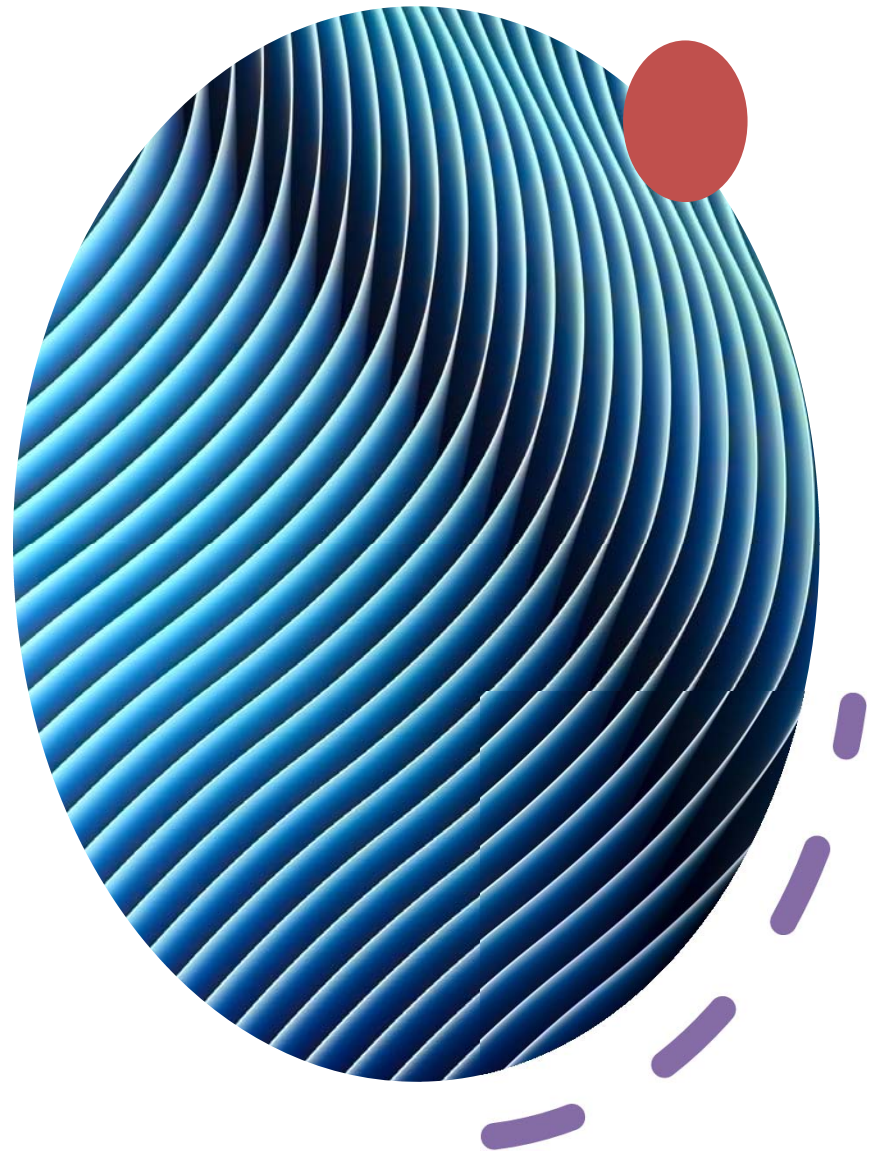


Western and Native Science

Western Science is largely aimed at exploration.

Native Science is aimed at conservation. Wellbeing practices were aimed at sustainability: it was not about capitalism.

Remember 'renewal'? That part of the paradigm that speaks to conservation?

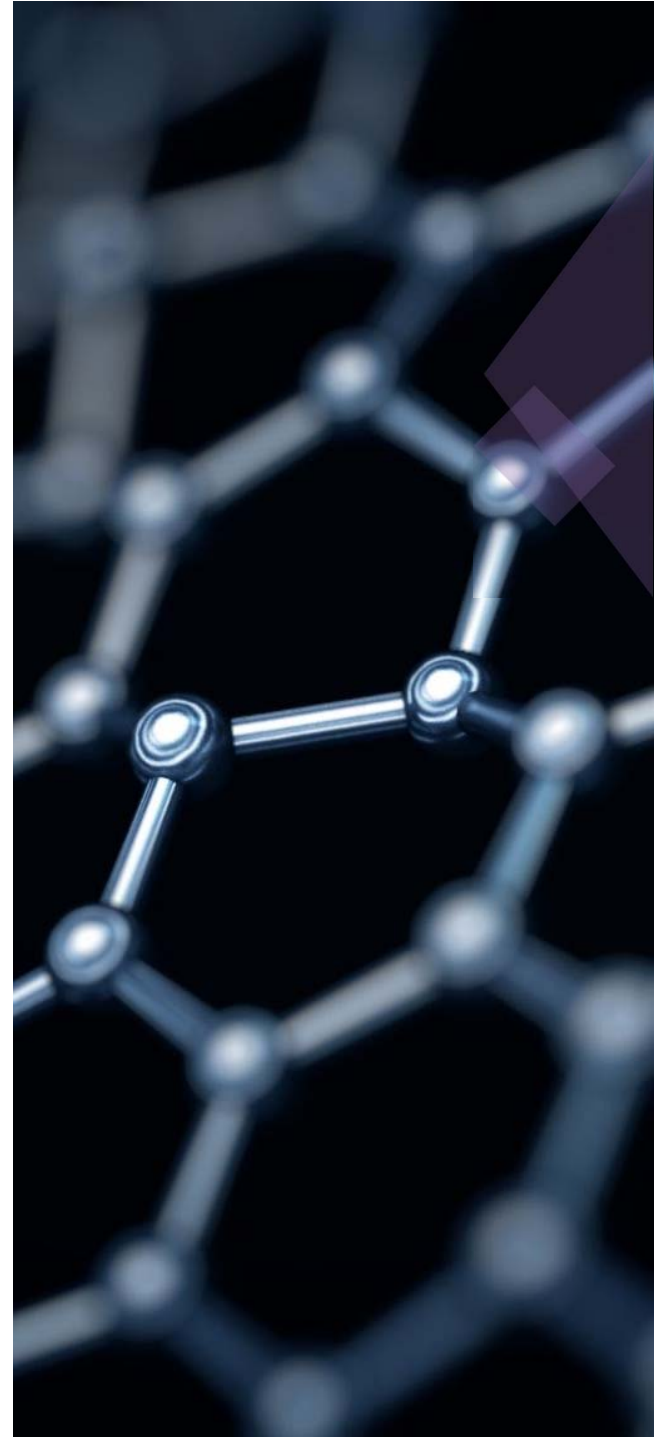


WESTERN AND NATIVE SCIENCE

The lesson to be learned is that we live in a very narrow spectrum of ideal conditions: conditions required for our existence. If we are going to survive as a species, we must maintain and renew those conditions. Otherwise, we will be part of a passing phase!

What is missing right now, in a Western dominated world, is 'ceremony' and respect for the environment and ecological balance.

We talk and meet about these issues but we hardly ever 'do'.





WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

- WE REALLY NEED TO LOOK AT OURSELVES AND REFLECT ON HOW WE DO THINGS AND WHY WE DO THINGS THE WAY WE DO.
- WE NEED TO BE PART OF THE CIRCLE AND INCLUDE OURSELVES AS PART OF THE TOTAL PICTURE.
- WE NEED 'ALL MY RELATIONS' TO WELCOME US BACK INTO THE CIRCLE.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

The TRC provides to all of us a 'wake up call'.

Reconciliation requires a synergetic approach to relationships. It cannot be an imbalanced approach.

It is time to take a hard look at our 'standard models': where are they taking us?

TRC allows us the luxury of stopping to reflect.

And now Covid-19 is giving us another chance to reflect.

So, when we are talking conservation, let's engage in spiritual responsibility and sing and talk to "all our relations".

