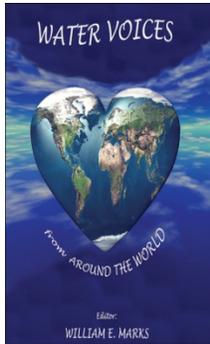


Jake Swamp

To People of the World:



The Haudenosaunee give thanks to all of the Natural World. Water was given original instructions and a duty on how to maintain balance within the natural world. When water is denied, its sacred duty within the world becomes unbalanced. People, plants, and animals become sick or die.

The Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse) have a traditional teaching that requires a person to determine the direction of the flow of water before placing a dipper into the river to quench one's thirst. Humans take water from the river with its flow, not against. To take water against the currents of nature is to cause disharmony, it throws off the balance of the universe and causes a backlash. The Haudenosaunee are opposed to dams because they interfere with water's natural flow.

Water has an original instruction to quench the thirst of the people and to replenish underground waters that satisfy the thirst of our Mother Earth making them all healthy. The Haudenosaunee believe that Mother Earth is floating in water supported by the ancient giant sea turtle. Water is sacred. All over the land, sacred water can be viewed in the form of rivers, streams, lakes, brooks, and waterfalls. Water trickles down in the form of rain, snow, ice, and tears.

We are dependent on water at every moment that we have breath. The most important responsibility humans have is to be thankful. The Haudenosaunee show this by giving thanks everyday in our address we call the Ohen:ton Karihwaterhkwen, which means the "Words before All Else." We give thanks to the sacredness of water.

Every life form, every species of life depends on the sacred waters. Therefore, when we express gratitude to the water spirits we are also honoring ourselves. We travel through life, as human beings with water everywhere we go. When we are born the water of our mother's womb releases us into this world.

Our physical make up is mostly water and we have the inherent responsibility to protect our own physical being, just as we would our favorite stream. Clean drinkable water provides a richness that goes beyond dollars and cents, for it maintains our spiritual fire, the sacredness of water.