

2021 CLIMATE CHANGE CHRONICLE 9

A Climate Change Practicum

How do we humans deal with something we have never really experienced before? I think climate change falls within this category. Traditionally we look for clues by examining what similar challenges have taught us in the way of both positive and negative lessons. For this reason we develop what are called practicums.

Many professions require some kind of practicum—a period of time, study and experience to introduce candidates to what lies ahead for them. This is true for professionals like doctors, nurses, and lawyers. It is true for soldiers who go through boot-camp training. It is true for religious orders whose candidates must go through a novitiate, and so forth for other professions.

So is there a practicum for us in this climate changing world? I think there is. It is called the Corona Virus Pandemic. Seeing what the two challenges have in common can give us an edge in dealing with the second and greater danger:

The pandemic transcends all geographic boundaries. So does climate change.

The pandemic requires a scientific approach to dealing with it. So does climate change.

The pandemic requires world-wide cooperation among nations. So does climate change.

The pandemic requires cooperation at the local, state and national level, and so does climate change.

The pandemic has shown weaknesses in some of our major systems. So has climate change.

So what we are learning from the pandemic—our successes and failures-- seems like a good training for what we can expect as climate change develops. So where do we start?

Looking to our current and future situation we need a new paradigm. Yes we need some temporary transitions but what we really need is a new and different foundation on which to build a new paradigm. As the environmental scientist Katherine Hayhoe has noted "*We have built a civilization on a world that doesn't exist anymore.*"

First Things First.

When I first began to think about how to face climate change I thought of our systems. Why? Because I saw our systems, specifically our economic, political and legal systems, as the causes. So creating new systems seemed to be the logical solution to climate change.

After further thought I realized that creating new systems was not the answer, at least it was not the starting point. The starting point was something within us, some kind of awareness or spiritual discovery. I realized that we would have to discover a new, personal relationship with Earth—and with others who share this same relationship. So where do we look for guidance?

Getting Down to Basics

Recently as I was wrestling with this problem I came across an article entitled *Indigenous to Life* by Daniel Christian Wahl. He was the former director of Findhorn College in Northern Scotland, a United Nations Award-winning institution. You can find the full article [here](#). I believe it provides the basis for finding our way in a climate changing world. (I would urge you to read the whole article. It is just a few pages. What follows are some of the key points.)

The word "indigenous" comes from the Greek and means "to give birth, or regenerate"

Wahl notes that *“regeneration is an inherent pattern of life itself and that all our distant common ancestors understood life as a regenerative community of which we are members not masters.”*

“We are all indigenous to life as a planetary process. The land does not belong to us. We belong to the land. The land and the sea will be there long after we return to the soil as compost for new life”.

“To co-create a generative future based on diverse regenerative cultures as elegant expressions of the bio-cultural uniqueness of the places they inhabit we require changes in doing, being and thinking.”

Wahl quotes Gregory Bateson in his 1970 essay ‘On Form, Substance and Difference: *“The organism which destroys its environment destroys itself. The unit of survival is a flexible organism-in-its environment.*

He says further, “Realigning with Earth’s wisdom is about re-inhabiting the regenerative community more consciously and humbly returning to our role as healers within that nested regenerative community of life. Our future will change depending upon the degree to which each and every one of us manages to re-inhabit this community.”

I think Daniel Christian Wahl’s statements might serve as a basis for a practicum that would teach us how to re-inhabit our Earth community.

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