

*Spiritual  
Ecology*  
*The Cry of the Earth*

A COLLECTION *of* ESSAYS  
EDITED *by* LLEWELLYN VAUGHAN-LEE

THE GOLDEN SUFI CENTER

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## *Listening to Natural Law*

CHIEF OREN LYONS

*Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan of the Onondaga Nation, CHIEF OREN LYONS is responsible for maintaining the customs and traditions of his people, while representing their message to the world community. Here he speaks about the spiritual laws of nature and the absolute nature of those laws. We have to change our ways and stop making war against Mother Earth. We need to learn once again how to respect nature, to be thankful and enjoy life.*

**N**EYAWENHA SKANNOH. It means "Thank you for being well." The greeting in itself is something of an idea of how Indian people think and how their communities operate.

What happens to you and what happens to the earth happens to us as well, so we have common interests. We have to somehow try to convince people who are in power to change the direction that they've been taking. We need to take a more responsible direction and to begin dealing with the realities of the future to insure that there *is* a future for the children, for the nation. That's what we're about. It is to our advantage as well as yours to be doing that.

In the concern and in the fights that we face as a common people, as human beings, as a species, we have to get together and we have to do things like we're doing now—meeting, sharing, learning. It all comes down to the will, what is in your heart. Indian people have survived up to this time because we have a strong will. We do not agree that we should be assimilated. We do not agree that we should give up our way of life. And that same will should be in your heart—the will that you do not agree that there be no future.

I don't believe, personally, that we have reached a point of no return in this situation that we're in, but we are approaching it. The farther you're away from a point of no return, the

more options you have. As we move each day closer to a point of no return, we lose that day's option. And there will come a point where we won't have an option. There will be no more options. At that point, people will cry and people will carry on and so forth. But as Chief Shenandoah said to me, "I don't know what the big problem is. It's too late anyway." I said, "Uncle, what do you mean by that?" "Well," he says, "they've done a lot of damage. They're going to suffer." Kind of a simple observation, but true enough. There is a lot of damage done and people are going to suffer, but he didn't carry out the thought that we were told a long time ago in the prophecies, that there was going to be a degradation of the earth. We were told that you could tell the extent of the degradation of the earth because there would be two very important systems to warn you.

One would be the acceleration of the winds. We were told that the winds would accelerate and continue to accelerate. When you see that the accelerations of the winds are growing, then you are in dangerous times. They said the other way to tell that the earth was in degradation was how people treated their children. They said it will be very important to note how people treat their children, and that will tell you how the earth is degrading. So when you open up the newspapers today, they talk about exploitive sex and children, they talk about homeless children, and you can count homeless children by the millions. To us, it's a severe indication of the degradation. Society doesn't care.

So we have to take those signposts seriously and begin to organize ourselves and do the best we can. We must gather ourselves together, give ourselves some moral support, enough to go home and start over and do it again, because everything starts at home. It starts right there with you. It starts with you and then your family. Then from your family

it goes out, and that's how you do it, that's how you have to do it. It's grassroots. You go back and you begin to inform and you get a little more excited and you get a little more severe in your positions and you begin to insist that people hear and listen. Education is important and how you educate people as to what we need is fundamentally important.

The spiritual side of the natural world is absolute. The laws are absolute. Our instructions—and I'm talking about for all human beings—our instructions are to get along. Understand what these laws are. Get along with laws, and support them and work with them. We were told a long time ago that if you do that, life is endless. It just continues on and on in great cycles of regeneration, great powerful cycles of life regenerating and regenerating and regenerating.

If you want to tinker with that regeneration, if you want to interrupt it, that's your choice, but the results that come back can be very severe, because again, the laws are absolute. There's no habeas corpus in natural law. You either do or you don't. If you don't, you pay. It's quite simple. So what we have to do is get our leaders to change, and if our leaders don't do it, we've got to raise better leaders, newer leaders. Raise your own leaders. Get them up there. It's your responsibility to raise good leaders. Get them up there where they can be effective and change the direction of the way things are headed.

I come from Onondaga, and from our country I remember when everybody planted. I stood behind one of those plows that you hooked behind a horse. And at my age, if you hit a rock, you flew right over the plow handle. It was hard to hold that plow. I remember that. It was hard work. Planting and agriculture are hard work. You have to get up early. You've got to do stuff, but it's great training for character. It's great training for becoming adult and becoming responsible,

the best training really. But getting back to agriculture is hard to do these days. There will come a time, however, when only those that know how to plant will be eating.

That's not far off. So all of those Indian Nations that built whole civilizations around food and around thanksgiving and around spiritual law, those Indian Nations have to resurge and have to remind one another how important that is. All communities talk about prayer. We just don't call it prayer, but we do it all the time. We sing songs, dawn songs, morning ceremonies, thanksgiving-coming-up-soon-songs. Thanksgiving all summer, all spring. All of our ceremonies are thanksgiving. We have thanksgiving twelve months a year.

In the spring when the sap runs through the trees, we have ceremonies, thanksgiving. For the maple, chief of the trees, leader of all the trees, thanksgiving. Thanksgiving for all the trees. Planting thanksgiving. Thanksgiving for the strawberries, first fruit. Thanksgiving for the bees, the corn, green corn, thanksgiving. Harvest thanksgiving. Community, process, chiefs, clan mothers, everybody is there. Families are there. How do you inspire respect for something? By giving thanks, by doing it.

We have to do that. We have to be thankful. That's what we said. Two things were told to us: To be thankful, so those are our ceremonies, ceremonies of thanksgiving. We built nations around it, and you can do that, too. And the other thing they said was enjoy life. That's a rule, a law—enjoy life—you're supposed to. I know you can only do as much as you can do, and then when you do that, you're supposed to get outside and enjoy life. Don't take yourself so seriously. Do the best you can but get at it. That's the way you and I have community. I'll be down in the mouth and be moping and dragging around, but by meeting with people and sitting and talking and listening to all of the positive energy and the intentions at Bioneers, for instance, and other gatherings, it's

renewable. I can go home and I can say, hey, there is a good bunch of people over there and they're working hard trying to help us out. Tell our own people to get off their lazy asses and do something. It's true. People are lazy today. They don't know how to work anymore.

That's the way it is and that's what it's going to take. Hard work will do anything. It used to be common, common law. So I would say that in the ideas of renewing yourself and the ideas of finding peace in our community, you should tell your leaders and you should tell everybody that there can never be world peace as long as you make war against Mother Earth. To make war against Mother Earth is to destroy and to corrupt, to kill, to poison. When we do that, we will not have peace. The first peace comes with your mother, Mother Earth.

*Dahnayto* (Now I am finished).