

Stewardship

The land is everything. It comes to us from an unspeakably ancient past, with its myriad inhabitants, its lakes, forests and topsoil; it goes on into an eternal future. During our short lives, it is ours to protect, to nourish, and to be nourished by.

If we succeed in our task of good stewardship, the land will go on to nourish ten thousand future generations of humans, as well as its other, more ancient inhabitants. Several thousand years from now a human teenager will sit by that creek that you love and feel his heart open to the wonders of life, while the cedars, the kingfishers and the salmon continue their eternal journey through the present.

In order to succeed, we need knowledge. In many places across the Earth, past generations have failed in their task, leaving barren lands where once their ancestors enjoyed far more. We have a long tradition of neglect, failure and then forgetfulness, when we even lose the memory of what was once there.

The knowledge of good stewardship should be passed on to each one of us, like a dowry or an inheritance. It is our story, and we need it. Without it, history is there to remind us that we are most likely to screw up. All it takes is a little carelessness - building a concrete edge along a lakeside shore, not understanding how this deprives the lake's inhabitants of their home; building a home on a site where the herons have always nested; spilling our wastes into the creeks and marine waters, not grasping that this poisons the shellfish.

In our souls, we may love the forests, the herons and the shellfish; but in our actions, often out of ignorance, we destroy them. That is why we need to become good stewards of the land, so that our actions can mirror the love that exists in our souls.

It is good to have experts - biologists, ecologists and planners who make it their business to exercise good stewardship. But without the knowledge and support of the rest of us, they cannot do their work. It needs the understanding and the work of all of us to give the land the protection and stewardship that it needs.

Written by: Guy Dauncey

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