

Bessie 3

Place

September 18, 2023

I'm back, Bessie the cow, the Earth Interbeing's messenger.

This time I get to tell you about place. Here we enter a way of living most of you will have a difficult time getting your head around. Way back in European history, say 3,000 years ago, your ancestors would have a lived experience of place, a way of living extinguished by the early Imperium – the Roman Empire and later the Holy Roman Empire. Be that as it may, let's do place.

To remind us, all beings share a single purpose: to care for the Earth Interbeing and all its ways of being. The wholeness of Earth Interbeing, its harmony and balance, depends upon the efforts of all beings to preserve, recover, and renew it.

A place inhabits us; we do not own it. We live within a place with all the other beings who also live there. Think about all the people who live in a place with you. Add all the pets, wildlife, farmed animals, plants, trees, and all the other life forms I have not mentioned who also live in the place.

Add the place's waters: its streams, rivers, lakes, ocean, sewers, its poisoned waters, and tap water. Think about the hills and valleys, the soil and stones, the hazardous waste sites, and the layers of rock underlying place. Think about the weather that comes and goes, the sun, moon, and stars and add them and all the other ways of being that I have not mentioned to place. Add all the place's sacred spots. Now think about all the beings who used to live in the place and the children of all beings waiting for their time to come and live in the place.

Now add all the place's processes – the life cycles, the food web, the flow of water and air, the exchanges of energy and materials, the culture. Now add all the external influences that act on the place. See place as constantly changing, transforming through the life and relationships of all its beings.

Think about how all these beings, energies, histories, and processes interact and interrelate. Think about the interdependence and interconnectivity of everything. Think about the Earth Interbeing of place as beloved relations. Think about place as sacred, the creation of the Creator. Think of *your* place as *our* place.

Now think about all of the different places the sacred Earth offers. Different places have different ways of interrelating and ways of fulfilling their responsibilities to care for the Earth Interbeing. Different places have different ways to celebrate the sacredness of their place. Differences only makes Earth Interbeing stronger.

I know I put a lot of thinking on you. And I also know that white privileged Americans do not have the lived experience to understand but a bit of what I said because place doesn't fit into your worldview. You see a piece of land and think of it as private property or as public land on which

people cannot freely live. Also, you all move frequently to greener pastures and do not come to know and let place live you. You lose depth in place, and the land loses those who would protect it.

But because the understanding of place underlies our responsibility to care for the Earth Interbeing, we came up with a possible stepping stone you might use to ease yourself into place. How about if you translated what an indigenous person might call place into the Earth?

Not that you “own” the Earth or Interbeing. Think of it as a starter place through which you can learn how to take care of a place in which you live by taking care of the Earth and all its life. That way you don’t get hung up on private ownership or exclusion as nobody yet claims they own the Earth and all life. Reread what I wrote earlier, changing the word Earth for place.

Place centers us in the sacred space in which we live our daily lives and have direct relationships with Creation, the place in which we live in ways that care for all beings, all our relations, and the Earth. We do not inhabit a place; place inhabits us. We do not have or own a place; the place has us. We do not dare impose our will upon place but yield to a place shaping us in the dance of Creation.

To live in a such a sacred place, beings need to listen to the Great Spirit’s instructions spoken through the land on how to live within the limits and possibilities of that place. In this way all can enduringly thrive and renew the harmony and balance of the place.

Again, I recognize that all this might have little meaning for those who see a piece of land through Imperially conditioned eyes, as something to buy or sell. Yet knowing the sacredness of where we live and our responsibilities to all the beings that the place inhabits depends upon knowing and following the ways of the sacred. Think of place as the temple in which you worship the sacred. Each interaction with each being becomes a devotion in caring for all life and the Earth. Think of place as where we can fulfill the purpose of our lives: to care for Earth Interbeing.

Imagine Earth Interbeing as circles overlapping circles within circles and including other circles, all moving within the whole. The sacred dwells within the center of every circle, and every circle fulfills its sacred responsibility to care for the Earth Interbeing. It gets complicated fast. But we all want this mystery of creation to continue, and we, meaning all our relations, have the responsibility to keep it going.

I encourage you to read some of the writings of the Native people listed below on the meaning and sacredness of place. I have much respect and gratitude for their wisdom.

Until next time, have a good life.

Leroy Little Bear, “Jagged Wordviews Colliding,” from *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. UBC Press (2000).

Gregory Cajeto Indigenous Education and Ecology from John Grim (ed.), *Indigenous Tradition and Ecology*. Harvard University Press (2001).

V.F. Cordova, “Ethics: The we and the I”, from Anne Waters, ed. *American Indian Thought*. Blackwell Publishing 2004.).

Jack D. Forbes, "Nature and Culture," from John Grim (ed.), *Indigenous Tradition and Ecology*. Harvard University Press (2001).

John Haudoeffer, "What is your rice?" from John Haudoeffer, et al (ed), *What Kind of Ancestor Do You Want to Be?* University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Winona LaDuke, "How to be better ancestors", from John Haudoeffer, et al (ed), *What Kind of Ancestor Do You Want to Be?* University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Darrell Addison Posey "Indigenous Property Rights and the Sacred Balance," from John Grim (ed.), *Indigenous Tradition and Ecology*. Harvard University Press (2001).

Werner Wilbert, "Warao Spiritual Ecology," from John Grim (ed.), *Indigenous Tradition and Ecology*. Harvard University Press (2001).