

## Being true guardians of the planet and nature

by Mark Pavilons

Most of us should realize by now we are only temporary guardians of this planet.

Our time is limited and yet our history, traditions and land ownership patterns have contributed to inequality, greed and a false sense of security.

I recently discovered the hypocrisy in words spoken at the beginning of official ceremonies, Council meetings, etc. We acknowledge the land we are on as territory of First Nations Peoples, and any treaties that were created so we could share it, too. It's also noted that it's 'unceded' - not handed over.

While this offering is meant as a form of reconciliation, it only further points to our troubled past.

We (or at least our ancestors) stole the very land we're standing on.

Stole, from who? Well, I suppose they just scooped it up because no one else claimed it. The Indigenous people stress they don't own the land; no one does. The land - the world - is a gift, an 'island' to be treated with respect. What we take, we give back.

Of course, we strayed from that idea centuries ago when imperialism simply laid claim to land our ancestors believed was 'up for grabs.'

How we obtained the right to owning our subdivision or estate property is a long, muddled history of land expropriation.

The world doesn't belong to us. We are merely tenants.

But let's move on. As guardians, our new legacy should be leaving the place better than we found it. And that includes conservation, environmental respect, re-growth, sustainability. It goes way beyond the recycling and organics we put at the end of our driveways.

We need to instill a profound love, connection and respect for nature - for all the land we've been gifted.

The mysterious powers of the universe, with a dash of divine intervention, created this beautiful planet of ours. It's our home.

Do we trash our own homes, leave litter about and destroy all the flora and fauna that abounds in our yards? Of course not. So, our responsibility must extend beyond property lines, borders and time zones.

Some of our fellow humans do get it and we should learn from them.

Allemansrätten is a common word in Swedish culture and literally means 'all man's rights.' In practise, it means you have the right to travel and stay (camp out) almost anywhere. It means the land is ours, and can be shared and enjoyed by all. Finland and Norway have similar ideas.

Their concept is built on trust and the responsibility that we take care of nature and not abuse it.

Simple, eh?

Now, it doesn't mean you can pitch a tent in someone's back yard, swim in their pool and use their BBQ. That would be rude, but funny.

Of course, the majority of Sweden's landscape is forest, so citizens are free to enjoy forest-related activities like picking berries and mushrooms.

You are allowed to camp on one specific spot in nature for 24 hours. After 24 hours, you can pack up and go somewhere else. You are free to pitch your tent near a lake or open field.

Sure, there are rules and one is that you shouldn't camp out next to a farm or someone's house.

Government-owned parks and reserves abound, giving residents the joy of experiencing the outdoors. Sweden boasts more than 30 national parks that are free to the public.

There are large-scale city parks, botanical gardens and many other countless wonders.

Our European cousins seem to be ahead of us in many regards. Their love of nature is only one aspect of their culture.

In some of the Scandinavian countries, the whole idea of single-family homes in subdivisions is totally foreign. People tend to own ?flats? and their form of holiday cottages are simple ?cabins,? not the million-dollar cottages we all know and love.

The Nordic Model provides a strong social safety net and its citizens are well looked after. It can be characterized simply as a two-way trust between the government and the population. The government trusts the people and gives them the freedom to do what they feel is right. In turn the people trust the government to act according to the national interest.

Wow, what a concept! Can't you see some of our politicians and policy makers cringing at this?

It goes back to trust and taking responsibility for nature, for well, everything.

Sounds pretty good to me.

And Caledon residents are up to the task ??e are environmentally conscious and outspoken advocates; our residents enjoy an abundance of nature's finest features, and we're involved in climate change.

As NATO?nations firm up commitments and borders in the face of Russian aggression, wouldn't it be nice to revert to a borderless world? Would one planetary governing body work, or solve all of our ills?

Are we not, in fact, the People of Turtle Island?

We may one day unite as global citizens, where equality, fairness, access and human rights reign supreme. I?know, I'm optimistic.

Really all it takes is a massive shift in our way of thinking, a one for all mentality instead of a crab in the bucket way of life.

So, we have the idea, the plan, but how do we execute it?

Happy pills in the water supply? Mushrooms in baked goods? Nature communes?

Perhaps all we need to do is raise our children with love and respect for each other, and for nature. Maybe we should help instill that sense of responsibility, where planting a tree takes precedence over ordering a pizza.

All ideas are welcome in one big natural suggestion box. Who's gonna start?