

Commentary on Parks and Protected Areas Research from the Perspective of a Member of First Nations

Gary Potts

Gary began his remarks by emphasizing that he did not speak for or on behalf of First Nations. Gary is a bushman who grew up in the Bush.

As Gary began speaking he gave an illustration of the rage within him. This rage is caused by the ignorance of colonial society institutions when speaking of nature as wilderness-savages. These words were on a poster entitled *Partnerships for Public Lands* which was put together by World Wildlife Fund Canada, Federation of Ontario Naturalists and Wildlands League.

In commenting on the morning presentations Gary felt that the word 'money' framed all of the presentations. Human values, emotions and science as well as *Lands for Life* were all affected by 'money'.

In the universal human cosmos, Mother Earth is a park. What is now Canada's indigenous presence has been smothered by a colonial "saran wrap". Overhead screen images represent the colonial painting of homelands which have been occupied by our people for thousands of years. However, communication and research are enabling people to break holes in the saran wrap. People on both sides of the saran wrap are starting to talk to each other. This is a good thing.

Humans are predators and not separate from the predator-prey system. It's in that light that we should be speaking of predator-prey sustainability. Man's dominion over nature can be turned around to show nature's dominion over man – life as we know it.

What was attempted at Temagami was the joining of the ancient homeland of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai (4000 square miles) with the settlers'. Recent institutions thus represent the past and present as well as a future of working together based on seven principles which govern land use (Table 1). This approach was intended to demonstrate over time that all things are connected and we must consider future generations and not deprive them of a base of life from which to grow and enjoy.

In the park mentality people may say in effect: *"I am going to the park to be with my natural mother."* In the Temagami Treaty of Co-Existence negotiations, we wanted to establish a basis where in time people would or might say:

"I live with my Natural Mother who will be the mother of all life until Father Sun burns out, or an asteroid or comet of sufficient size hits earth, eliminating most life or until the human predator overloads or breaks down life sustaining systems. Of the three, the last one is the only one we can influence."

The End and the Beginning.

The basic principles which will direct land stewardship decisions in N'Daki Menan and the implementation of this Agreement are:

- a) The goal of land stewardship will be to sustain life and to maintain the natural integrity of all life forms in and on the land;
- b) The protection of burial, sacred cultural and heritage sites will have priority;
- c) Sustainable development of the lands, for instance, development which does not compromise the options or the quality of life for future generations will have priority;
- d) The recognition and management of rare, threatened and endangered flora and fauna to ensure sustained and enhanced populations will have priority;
- e) The recognition and management of areas of natural heritage which may have significant natural features and attributes, such as areas of natural and scientific interest in order to preserve their unique qualities will have priority;
- f) Any planned human activities must respect, protect, maintain or rehabilitate fully functioning ecosystems and the life therein; and
- g) The parties agree that the water systems, levels and quality throughout N'Daki Menan are a matter of significance to both parties and that all planned activity on the land or water must respect, protect, maintain or rehabilitate the quality, levels and quantity of the water systems.

Table 1: Basic Principles for Directing Land Stewardship Decisions in N'Daki Menan