

OGICHI TIBAKONIGAYWIN, KIHCHÉ'OTHASOWEWIN, TAKO WAKAN:

The Great Binding Law Written at Turtle Lodge

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Nitam – Michemach Oche – Ahana...

In the beginning, when time started, a long, long time ago, *Kizhay Manitou*, the Great Spirit, gave us one universal Law – *Ogichi Tibakonigaywin* – a Law that connects us all. Through this Law we were all given our unique languages, songs, ceremonies, ways of life, teachings and stories. We were all given our ways of loving and taking care of Mother Earth.

Kizhay Manitou put spirit in Mother Earth and all of life. We come from the spirit world and flow through the Earth. We will all return to the spirit world and to the Earth when our journey on Earth has been completed.

Through Mother Earth, *Kizhay Manitou* planted the seeds of life, with Original Instructions on how to be and how to sustain our relationship with Mother Earth. Mother Earth gave birth to the plants, the animals, the birds and finally to the human being. *Kizhay Manitou* gave us medicines for everything that can affect us.

Mother Earth is alive and she is the Original Mother of life. She has a living spirit and she is sacred. Mother Earth is so beautiful – she is the most beautiful creation – the most beautiful woman of all.

As the Mother of life, Mother Earth gives birth, and gives us everything we need to live – the food, the water, the medicines, the clothing, the shelter, and most of all, the love, kindness and teachings that a mother gives to her child.

Her teachings are reflected in Natural Laws – the balance of nature in the rising and setting of the sun, the patterns of the weather through the winds, the rains, and the elements of life, the natural flow of the blood of the Earth through the rivers and the oil beneath her, the cycles of the moon and the breaking of the waters when a child comes, as woman gives life in the most natural of ways. As long as we are breathing this beautiful air, whether we realize it or not, there is an invisible umbilical cord that always connects us to our Original Mother – our life source, Mother Earth.

In Nehetho, the word *Waskaawe siweno* (WAS-KAAH-WAY-SEE-WIN) means “Everything around you” and describes how we are all connected.

In Dakota, *Mitakuye Owasana* means “All my relations – we are related.” We are related to the stars in the sky, the birds, the fish, the animals and the plant life.

In Anishinaabe, *Nikanisitook* acknowledges “All my relatives in life.”

With the exception of the human being, all of the other living beings of creation have continued to follow their Original Instructions and live in balance and harmony with Natural Laws. It is only the human being that has severed its natural connection to Mother Earth and lost its connection to her Natural Laws.

We cannot continue to disrupt the Natural Laws of life. If even one of us disrespects that Great Binding Law, it affects us all, and it will come back to us. Nature's Laws are self-enforcing. What we put into our circle always returns to our web of life. Mother Earth will have the final say because she is the Mother to us all.

Nature is always giving us signs to bring us messages. Right now, the human beings are behaving out of balance, and Mother Earth is reflecting that imbalance through climate change.

We are the Earth. We are the voice of the Earth. In our Original Instructions as human beings, *Kizhay Manitou* gave us the responsibility to respect, take care of, and most importantly to make a journey to Mother Earth, to connect to the land and learn how to live.

We are the free and independent Original People of this land. As the roots of this land, we are the true leaders of our ancestral lands – *Manito Ka Apit* – Where *Kizhay Manitou* – the Great Spirit – sits.

We come from the Dakota, Nehetho, and Anishinaabe Nations who have lived on our ancestral lands since *Kizhay Manitou* placed us here with our languages, songs, ceremonies, teachings and ways of life. We have always been here.

As unique Dakota, Nehetho, and Anishinaabe Peoples, we speak with one voice. We have respect for each other. As the Original People we welcome you. We come forward to share with you. We come to share that love with you. We bring our shared understanding and that is this:

We are all brothers and sisters and we all have a sacred responsibility to take care of and make an alliance with Mother Earth.

We are a peaceful people. We are not asking for anything for ourselves. The human being was the last part of creation to be created. It is our spiritual responsibility to take care of that life.

Kizhay Manitou had a vision of a world filled with peace and love. It is through the land that we can find that peace and love.

All of humanity needs to make a journey to the land, to the sacred sites, places of healing, teaching and connection, to find peace.

We make an invitation to the whole human family, and all the children, to come to our lodges so we can teach them to love the land, connect to the land, and take care of the land. Our journey begins with gratitude to the Earth and to the Spirit. *Kizhay Manitou* gave all of us gifts to share with each other, to take care of the Earth and all life.

In our lodges, the children will hear the teachings, feel the ceremonies and feel the love for Mother Earth.

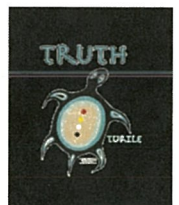
Our ancestors prophesized of this time – a time of climate change, a time of crossroads, a time of self-examination, and a time of choice. Our choice is not a choice of words, it is a choice of action. We need to stand strong now in alliance with Mother Earth.

We are all in this together. Today, we call on all Nations of the world to join us in the spirit of our Original Instructions to care for Mother Earth together, and find true peace.

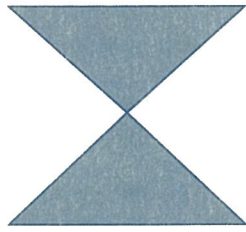
It will require a peaceful journey back to the Earth, to find our direction for our survival.

As one of our great Lakota leaders of the past, Crazy Horse, said:

Upon suffering beyond suffering;
The Red Nation shall rise again.
It will be a blessing for a sick world
A world filled with broken promises, selfishness and separations
A world longing for light again!
I see a time, long after the skies have grown dark and dirty
And the Water has become bad-smelling
I see a time of seventh generation,
When all the colours of mankind
Will gather under the Sacred Tree of Life
And one whole Earth will become one Circle again.



Appendix A: Appendix Spirit Trail of Life Story by Henry Skywater¹



There is a light from the heavens that enters the mother's womb (travelling from the top right corner of the triangle). The mother nurtures that spirit. The base of the triangle on the underside represents our walk in life. When our spirit finally returns to the spirit world, it forms the angle back up to the centre, to the house in the heavens (centre point of the triangle), before it finally makes the journey back to the Creator (the upper triangle).

Appendix B – The Selfish Son/Greedy Son by Henry Skywater

There was a caring and loving mother who had a selfish son.

One day the selfish son was sick and his kidneys were failing so he went to his mother and asked his loving caring mother if she could give him her kidneys. Being the loving caring mother that she was, she gave her selfish son her kidneys. Then he asked for her liver because his liver was failing.

This went on until all she had left was her heart. The selfish son asked for his Mother's heart which she gave to her son. Now she became just an empty shell. Her body as an empty shell collapsed because the selfish son took everything that his loving, caring Mother had with no regard for her life.

Is this what we are doing to our Mother Earth?

Appendix C – You Are Like Mother Earth

Your flesh and body represents Mother Earth.
Your bones represents the stones.
Your hair represents the Tree Nation.
Your fine hair on your body represents the medicines and grasses.
Your small veins represents the creeks.
Your big blood veins represents all rivers.
Your heart represents all the lakes.
Your liver represents the oceans.
Your four limbs represents four brother winds.
Your head represents the heavens.
Your blood flows the same way as the waters.

We should look after Mother Earth like we look after ourselves.

1 Found in Harry Bone et al, "The Journey of the Spirit of the Red Man" (2012) Trafford Publishing at p 12.