

Animals as Citizens of Gaia Democracy and Multispecies Constitutionalism:

Reconnecting with the animate earth (*anima mundi*)

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Abstract

This lecture explores the *turn* to the ways biodiverse life animates and co-sustains life over 4 billion years and in response to five mass extinctions as the guiding light for co-sustainable human governance within 'Gaia [earth] democracy.' The complementary *turn or transformation* in law is from seeing law as a human-imposed order by states or global legal orders to 'planetary multispecies constitutionalism.' This is the view that the ways biodiverse planetary life sustains life constitutes a complex constitutive order that humans need to learn how to redesign their legal orders in accordance with if we are to recover from the sixth mass extinction and the twenty-second collapse of anthropocentric civilizations. There is a large body of research on this transition in multidisciplinary systems theory at the planetary level, and in multidisciplinary landed-pedagogy at the ecosocial level. UVic law is at the leading edge of this movement. I explore this field by building on Maneesha Deckha's research on legally recognizing the 'beingness of animals' and of 'animacy' more generally (*anima mundi* or Gaia hypothesis), and the co-sustainable place of human animals within this Gaia democracy and nomos.

Introduction

I would like to suggest the three following background readings for this lecture: Maneesha Deckha, *Animals as Legal Beings: Contesting Anthropocentric Legal Orders* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021) and M. Deckha (2020) "Unsettling Anthropocentric Legal Systems: Reconciliation, Indigenous Laws, and Animal Personhood," *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 41:1, 71-97. In addition, it would help to read James Tully, "Sustainable Democratic Constitutionalism and Climate Crisis," (2020) 65:3 *McGill LJ* 545. It provides the background for this lecture.

The central theme of the lecture is expressed in Bill Reid's sculpture, *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*. An image of it accompanied the announcement of the lecture. It is available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirit_of_Haida_Gwaii.

1. Animacy (feminine)

I would like to begin by drawing on two themes in Maneesha's work. The first is her thesis that the common law, as it is presently interpreted, misrecognizes the "beingness of animals." She argues that it misrecognizes animals because it is 'anthropocentric.' The law tends to see them through the lens of property and personhood, and in terms of rights.

If we move around and try to see animals from an 'anti-anthropocentric' perspective and towards the perspectives of various kinds of animals, three familiar, central features of their beingness come into view. (1) Embodiment, (2) relationality, and (3) vulnerability. Drawing on Heidegger, she argues that the mode of being of animals is, basically, "being-with" (*mitsein*). In addition, not only is being primarily being-with others. It is also oriented to 'care' – of oneself and of relational others.

In addition, there is a fourth feature that unites this embodied, relational and vulnerable mode of being in the world with others. It is an orientation or *ethos* of 'responsibility,' 'openness,' 'responsiveness' and 'reciprocity' to one's interdependent relatives. In the life sciences this *ethos* - or *nomos* - is simply called '*symbiosis*': that is, 'living co-sustainably within the earth's biodiverse networks. Thus, I will call it a *symbiotic ethos*. It is as diverse in its modes of enactment as earth's biodiversity. It is the main thread of this lecture.

Three features of Indigenous law

The question then is: how would a legal system recognize the beingness of animals given this understanding of their embodied, interdependent, vulnerable and diverse ways of being? To explore this question, Maneesha turns to ways in which many Indigenous peoples understand the beingness of animals within their legal systems. She draws on the work of several Indigenous law professors and graduates of UVic law.

In Indigenous law, we see three key differences with Western legal orders. First, legal orders are kin-centric or animal-centric relationships, not anthropocentric (human-centric): that is, "relationships with all our relatives" – human and more than human, as Basil Johnston puts it.

Second, all our "animate relatives" include not only 'animals' and 'human animals' in the narrow, modern Western sense. They include all living beings: animals, trees, rivers, oceans, ecosystems, soil, rocks, and the living earth herself.

Third, legal systems are not imposed by humans over the earth, animals and human beings by coercion. The diverse networks of laws or *nomoi* that govern animate life on earth already exist. Interacting in accordance with them has co-sustained life for 4 billion

years, and recovered from 5 previous mass extinctions by processes of symbiosis and symbiogenesis: that is, the creation of new forms of life.

On this anima-centric worldview, the role of humans is not to make laws and impose them coercively over each other and the earth – as a storehouse of natural resources and human resources to be extracted, commodified, used and disposed. Rather, the role of law and governance is to study and understand the norms that already govern biodiversity symbiotically and to design modes of governance and law that ensure that humans act in accordance with, and evolve with, them. As John Borrows, Val Napoleon and Aaron Mills suggest, this is the way of law and governance of the Indigenous peoples they work with.

The Western life-sciences have developed (or rediscovered) a similar view over the last century. It is called ‘biomimicry’ or ‘Gaia-mimicry.’ It is also called the “survival of the fittest” in contrast to the “survival of the fittest” of the 19th century. Here is how Fritz Capra puts it:

The key to an operational definition of ecological sustainability is the realization that we do not need to invent sustainable human communities from scratch but can model them after nature’s ecosystems, which are sustainable communities of plants, animals and micro-organisms. Since the outstanding characteristic of the Earth household is its inherent ability to sustain life, a sustainable human community is one designed in such a way that its ways of life, businesses, economies, federations, physical structures, and technologies do not interfere with nature’s inherent ability to sustain life. Sustainable communities and networks evolve their patterns of living over time in continual interaction with other living systems, both human and non-human.

Thus, this hypothesis of the way that life sustains life on earth is what I call “Animals as Citizens of Gaia Democracy” and “multispecies constitutionalism.”

You can see these three features of Indigenous law in the sculpture by Bill Reid, the great Haida carver, entitled *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii* that accompanies this lecture. The Chief standing in the canoe does not have a device of “rule” in the Western sense: that is, of violence, force or coercion. He or she simply holds a talking stick. The chief does not speak. He or she simply passes the talking stick to each interdependent animal in the canoe (that is, to ‘all affected’). They speak freely and at length from their perspective, subject-position and mode of beingness, explaining the situation as they see it; and suggesting how they think they should resolve the current disagreement, reconcile and move forward. All the other passengers listen and try to put themselves in the mode of

being of the speaker as much as possible. They then speak from their perspectives. The others listen and try to move around and see the situation from these perspective.

These dialogues of reciprocal elucidation are seen as the exchange of the 'greatest gifts' humans and other animals can offer one another: to move around and see the situation in which we live here and now from the perspectives of the all the interdependent and vulnerable living members. Each member expresses their gratitude for the gift of the views of others, and then reciprocates by presenting the gift of their perspective (their story) as clearly as possible.

The dialogue thus brings into being or “sym-generates” relationships of gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationships among all the passengers. As I am sure you all know, “gift-gratitude-reciprocity” relationships are – precisely – the nature of the symbiotic relationships among all lifeforms that co-sustain life on earth. That is, by generating these GGR relationships in the canoe, they reconnect themselves with the larger GGR relationships that sustain all life on earth. This *exemplifies* Gaia democracy and multispecies constitutionalism.

These dialogues often begin with the exchange of gifts and condolence ceremonies, as in the oral treaty tradition. This reminds the participants of the relationships that sustain all life, and which they have alienated themselves from for some reason, and now are working to reconnect and reconcile. Once these symbiotic relationships are established through listening and story-telling, they provide the basis for working out a way forward.

Although the passengers are clearly disagreeing and conflicting within the canoe, this takes place within a broader horizon of agreement in a symbiotic way of life that supports this surface disagreement and its resolution. This is indicated by the fact that they are in a stable cedar canoe and they are actually paddling in unison despite the superficial disagreements. And, of course, the canoe itself is held afloat by the symbiotic buoyancy of the ocean on which they depend.

The “*Spirit of Haida Gwaii*” is thus the life-sustaining Gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationships that animate and co-sustain all life – *anima mundi*.

You might say that it is not a dialogue between humans and animals, but, rather, between members of various human clans of the Haida nation that take the name of various animals. So, once again, humans are ruling over and speaking for animals.

I disagree with this interpretation. The members of clans have the responsibility to learn about the “beingness” of their animal in their daily lives by means of *perceptual* dialogues with these species in their habitat and learning their lifeways. That is, they learn through

earth pedagogy the ways of the animals with which they share their ecosystems and bioregions. In ceremonies, they often put on a mask of their clan animal and dance in a way that illustrates that particular animal's mode of beingness, so others can understand how they have to relate with them.

The fourth feature of Indigenous law that differentiates it from the common law is that the humans subject to it work up their articulation of the law democratically - through dialogues with all animals subject to it. They presume that the persons who speak in the dialogue have studied the *nomos* in their eco-region through years of living and engaging with it.

[As Maneesha points out, humans still *speak for* the animals and ecosystems. This raises questions about the right they claim to have to eat some animals. I will not discuss this aspect here, but will be happy to discuss it in the discussion period.]

Examples of joining hands on the West Coast

Traditional Indigenous knowledge-keepers and Western life scientists began to converge - from their very different perspectives - on this understanding of the relationships of co-sustainability of life on earth after WWII. The first successful encounter on the West Coast was on Haida Gwaii in the 1980s; then the Clayoquot Sound protest, in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous people joined hands, and this led to the negotiation of the Clayoquot Sound Forest Practices Code and co-management agreements in the 1990s. The Great Bear Rainforest agreements followed in the early 2000s. Several land back, co-governance and co-management agreements are in the courts and in governmental negotiations today. Moreover,

The Indigenous law and Common Law Program, the Indigenous Law Research Unit, and earth-based legal pedagogy developed during the same period. There are now many practices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants working in diverse ways to free themselves from unsustainable social relationship and to cultivate sustainable, symbiotic relationships that mimic the symbiotic relationships that sustain their bioregions. John Borrows calls these "making meaning" practices. We can discuss these in the discussion period.

2. Animus (masculine)

The question today is how to understand and extend these small, local practices of working towards reconciliation with mother earth and each other to a larger scale so they may become transformative of the dominant, competitive, antagonistic, and unsustainable legal, governmental, and economic systems.

This is the question of ecosocial succession from predominately unsustainable to sustainable strongly coupled ecosocial systems.

Let's begin from the insight of Maneesha's work and her engagement with Indigenous knowledges that the *vulnerable relationships* among animals includes all animate beings, including the living earth. That is, animals are animate. They are all animated by the complex relationships of animacy - *anima mundi* – of the living earth.

For Indigenous people, the *power of animacy* to sustain life is described as gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationships and cycles, as we have seen. And this is often redescribed as 'symbiosis', 'symbiogenesis,' 'mutual aid', 'mutuality,' 'sharing,' and simply 'joining hands,' as in the Haudenosaunee *Great Law of Peace* and the Oral Treaty Tradition since the 17th century.

In the life and earth sciences the power of animacy is called *anima mundi*, symbiosis, and symbiogenesis. In systems theory, its co-sustaining cycles are called 'virtuous cycles' in both the ethical sense and the systemic sense that they sustain the interdependent members, the reciprocal relationships among them, and the system of systems as a whole. David Bohm and James Lovelock call this earth system of systems "the implicate order." Nu Chan Nulth Elder Umek, Richard Atleo Senior, calls it "*Tsawalk*."

However, these animate systems are not hard-wired. The members of them always have 'room to maneuver' within them (*Spielraum*). They are 'interdependent,' - not 'intra-dependent.' As Maneesha puts it, they are relational *and vulnerable* in their indeterminate interactions. This is why learning the symbiotic ethos through practice is a necessary feature of sustaining life on earth.

To use the Indigenous terminology, animals have the capacity to 'take' all the gifts that are given to them by other interdependent lifeforms, yet be ungrateful, rather than grateful, take advantage of the gift by using and consuming it, and, further, they can refuse to reciprocate. These relationships are thus often 'far from equilibrium.' These non-symbiotic interactions are 'vicious' in both the ethical and systems sense. If they become habitual and systemic, a virtuous cycle is succeeded by a "vicious cycle". Members prey on their sustainability conditions without reciprocity, destroying interdependent ways of life around them (super-predation), and thus eventually destroying their own life conditions. This is referred to as 'extinction' and 'collapse.' In Indigenous languages this is called Windigo or Wetiko.

In European languages, these virtuous and vicious cycles are described in the terms of *anima* and *animus*. *Anima* is feminine. It refers to the virtuous cycles in which all members have mastered the ethos of symbiotic interaction with all affected. When there are

disruptions and disputes, they have ways to 'conciliate' their differences, adjust their *regulatory* relationships within the background, *constitutive* virtuous relationships of the implicate order as a whole and carry on together. So, the basic cycle that sustains life is symbiotic, virtuous and conciliatory. This is literally the power of the animacy of the earth: anima mundi. It is associated with the breath (*pneuma*), the soul (psyche), and with always interacting with and for all affected (*mitsein*).

This is why Sir James Lovelock called his planetary symbiosis hypothesis the *Gaia Hypothesis*. Gaia is the female goddess of the living earth, just as the earth is called "mother earth" in many Indigenous languages.

Vicious social systems

Vicious cycles of taking advantage, non-reciprocating and exercising power-over others, rather than animate power-with and for others, are called in contrast, *animus*. Animus and its cognates are all masculine: animosity, enmity, adversity, and so on.

If we are to understand *and* transform the unsustainable vicious social crises, including legal and governmental crises, and the climate and pollution crises they are causing, we need to understand how these vicious cycles irrupt within virtuous cycles, gradually become dominate, and lead eventual to societal collapse and ecological extinction: as has happened with 21 prior human civilizations, 5 mass extinctions, and thousands of smaller collapses and extinctions.

Given the room to maneuver (*Spielraum*) within interdependent relationships and the vulnerability to the members, vicious behaviour (animosity) can irrupt in any relationship. Let's examine the irruption of vicious interaction and counter-action in human relationships.

Pema Chodron gives a famous description of how animosity irrupts within animacy relationships in response to a disturbance. It is a 'charge' (*shenpa*) that irrupts when another person or event strikes you in the wrong way:

"In Tibetan there is a word that points to the root cause of aggression, the root cause also of craving. It points to a familiar experience that is at the root of all conflict, all cruelty, oppression, and greed. The usual translation is 'attachment', but this doesn't adequately express the full meaning. I think of *shenpa* as "getting hooked" ... or as a "charge."

We usually catch this charge of angry energy when it arises, reconsider its causes, and conciliate and resolve the conflict nonviolently with the other. However, when we get hooked by the emotional charge of anger, fear and hatred we separate ourselves from the

anima relation with the other who is taken to be the cause of the anger. We take up an adversarial relationship, and engage in three types of response: (1) fighting the opponent, (2) fleeing the situation, or (3) submitting to the other. The conflict is resolved by the coercive imposition of power-over/under relationships of various kinds: ruler/ruled, master/servant, civilized/primitive, employer/employee, and so on. These imposed master-subject relationships become systemic.

The people subject to these power-over relations “comply” with them. They do not “co-operate” the relationships. That is, the relationship is not under the shared authority of those subject to it by them having a say and hand in co-sustaining and improving it, as in the gift-gratitude-reciprocity relationships of *anima mundi*. Rather, the subjects of the master-servant relationships – from individuals to corporations and states - are constrained to compete with each other for comparative advantages of various kinds: ranks, positions, riches, power, fame and so on. Moreover, the people subject to them resent the form of subjection and respond by protest, resistance, and revolutions that impose new relationships of power-over others.

The unintended consequence of the development of these competitive social systems and the legal and political systems that regulate them is presumed to be economic growth; the spread of democracy; equality; and world peace in future generations ‘to come.’ This ‘enlightened master-servant dialectic’, as it is called, is endorsed in one way or another by all the major theorists of capitalist and anti-capitalist modernization and globalization. These global assemblage of vicious systems is unsustainable and ultimately self-destructive as we have known since the 1950s, and the ‘great acceleration’ since then.

Since we are all subjects of these vicious and unsustainable social systems, how do we work to free ourselves from the habitual ‘charge’ of them and begin to reconnect with all our kin in mutually life-sustaining ways? One answer is to “be the change” by changing the habitual way we normally interact.

To understand this kind of change we have to turn to *kinesiology*. The reason for this is that the phenomenological way in which we interact as diverse animal beings is of course primarily perceptual, not linguistic. This is the primary realm of Maneesha’s *symbiotic ethos* with other animals of all kinds. This is not the popular kinesiology of independent bodies. It is the ecosocial kinesiology of relational and vulnerable embodied animals who are trying to find their ways in the relations in which they are entangled.

Proprioception and self-change

Our human nervous systems are the life system through which we perceive and interact with the other members of the living earth. They are composed of two distinct types of perceptual receptors. They are called the “sympathetic” and the “parasympathetic” nervous systems. The sympathetic nervous system (SNS) perceives perturbations (disturbances) as ‘potential threats to our well-being.’ It tends to separate us from the cause of the perturbation and try to protect us from it. It often triggers the emotions of anger, fear and hatred, depending on the perceived threat, and thus to orient us to responding by fighting, fleeing or submitting in response. (It is Pema Chodron’s ‘shenpa’ or ‘affect’.)

On the other hand, the ‘parasympathetic nervous system’ (PSNS) enables us to free ourselves from the sympathetic or ‘othering’ response, to pause and examine the perturbation and its causes, to consider the appropriate response with understanding and compassion, and, at its best, to ‘transform’ the energy of our initial anger into working-with, rather than against, the animate beings who caused the perturbation. Kinesiologists call it our ‘sixth sense.’ It is the perceptual basis of Maneesha’s responsive and reciprocal ethos that keeps us integrated in the symbiotic relationships that sustain our lives.

The problem today is that the parasympathetic nervous system (PSNS) is not paramount. The defensive-aggressive-submissive sympathetic nervous system has become paramount in our subject formation in the competitive relationships of the dominant, heterotelic social systems and technosphere we *inhabit* most of the time.

Fortunately, it is possible to re-integrate the two nervous systems so that the parasympathetic system is paramount, and thus re-integrated into the interdependent lifeworld. The process of re-integration is called “proprioception.” It consists of a set of practices of the self and of the self-with-others. These include: learning to balance stress, meditation, breath work, yoga, nutrition, exercise, osteopathy, and other kinesthesia exercises. It also includes such practices as trying to perceive and be responsive to the living earth around us, working with others, with plants and photosynthesis, agriculture, handicrafts, weaving, canoeing, nature therapy, and other practices of treating Gaia herself as our university and teacher. These practices gradually re-weave and re-integrate us into the living earth so that *animacy* rather than *animosity* becomes our paramount orientation once again.

Proprioception is thus the basis of the common sense saying that if you wish to make change you have to begin by “being the change yourself” because the means are “autotelic”. Means prefigure & shape ends. You not only change yourself, but in so doing, you begin to change your interdependent relatives. It is the regeneration of the ethos of

connectedness appropriate to the *being-with* ontology of all animate beings. It reconnects us with *anima mundi*.

3. Ecosocial and eco-legal succession

This work on our own life-system is not only how individuals ‘free themselves’ from captivity to the unsustainable vicious social systems. It is the way the living earth herself recovers from vicious cycles. These processes are called “ecological and ecosocial succession.’ Mike Simpson, a former UVic student and now geography professor gives us an example of a west coast forest recovering from clear-cutting:

Living systems do not only reproduce themselves. Their very life processes nourish their habitat and strengthen the conditions of life around them (symbiosis). *They thereby create an organism that is larger than themselves or their individual species.* When a forest is growing back from a disturbance, herbaceous (non-woody) plants are the first to move in. These plants exude sugars that attract bacteria around their roots. The bacteria in turn exude an alkaline bioslime that creates a favorable habitat for themselves as well as for the pioneer plant species. The alkaline condition of the bioslime also allows bacteria to break down ammonia in the soil into nitrates that are taken up by plants, allowing them to grow vegetatively. This cycle of life creating the condition of more life continues as the forest gradually grows into a rich, biodiverse ecosystems (*ecological succession*). *Living systems are not only self-regulating but they are also relational in so far as they build the conditions of life around them.*

Indigenous peoples on the West Coast have known these features of ecological and ecosocial succession for centuries. When Nancy Turner held a workshop on regenerating plants, places and peoples of the West coast in 2019, the Kwakwaka’wakw participants shared a famous dance with the participants. It is called *Atla’gimma* – the “Spirits of the Forest.” In the dance, a person or persons becomes inhabited by Wetiko. They are full of animosity, competitive aggression, and greed. The others do not counter-attack, run away, or submit. Rather, they exercise their parasymphathetic ethos of interacting mutually with of all their relatives around the Wetiko character. As their gift-gratitude-reciprocity permaculture grows it gradually surrounds and transforms the Wetiko character and becomes paramount again, just as in ecological succession.

At the heart of these regeneration practices of self with others are practices of “listening” to each other. *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii* exemplifies these listening practices as ways of resolving conflicts, reconciling, and paddling together. Indigenous practices of story-telling-and-listening are central to all types of conflict resolution. (The central example is the potlatch.)

Yet, storytelling-and-listening is not primarily a linguistic practice. It consists of embodied, perceptual practices with all living beings in ways appropriate to their phenomenal modes of beingness; not to our specific linguistic mode. It is beyond linguistic communication. It is the phenomenological behaviour that 'speaks for itself' of animals, plants, trees, and ecosystems that one attunes to and learns in earth pedagogy. It exemplifies symbiosis.

Perceptual dialogue is 'communion' with 'companions': that is, with relatives with whom you "share bread." Communion is the level at which we really communicate with all our relations as interdependent beings. In the Indigenous ceremonies of story-telling and listening with which I am familiar, dancing, enacting and showing are more important than words. This is the almost lost dimension of life we are trying to recover. It is the dimension through which *anima mundi* – the greatest power on earth – connects and animates all life. (See Thomas Berry, "The Ecozoic Era" and Suzanne Simard, *Finding the Mother Tree*).

Super predation

When people free themselves from subjection to vicious social systems and engage in practices of co-generating symbiotic permacultures of virtuous systems of freedom-with-all-relatives, they realize that this is manifestly a superior mode of being-in-the-world-with-other-beings. The animacy empowers them and buoys them up in the same way it does when we learn to swim, paddle, walk and breathe.

They also become aware of another feature of the vicious way of life they left behind. It presents itself as independent, autonomous, masterful, and controlling. Yet, from the perspective of the interdependent, being-with way of life, it appears as a *predatorial way of life, completely dependent on the virtuous natural and human life systems that it exploits and eventually destroys*.

So, they realize that various vicious social systems will now try to prey on the virtuous ecosocial and eco-legal systems they are working to co-generate. For example, multinational industrial and financial corporations will accept UNDRIP and Indigenous self-government, and then loan them hundreds of millions of dollars so they can buy shares in pipelines, LNG Industries, natural resource companies, and so on. The First Nations become subjects of these vicious systems by indebtedness and job creation.

This form of predation and subjection is similar to the way corporations were able to control the economic development of Third World countries by the imposition of constitutions and international trade agreements that opened their natural and human resources to free trade dominated by the corporations of the former colonial powers.

Nkrumah called this 'neo-colonialism.' The kind of neo-colonial predation occurring now throughout the fourth world of Indigenous peoples is similar. The legal and governmental systems of settler colonial states and international law are supporting it to various, contested degrees. It is dividing Indigenous communities against each other. Indigenous peoples and allies realize this and are responding in various ways.

How should Indigenous people, settler allies, and others who share the hypothesis of Gaia democracy & multispecies constitutionalism respond to this neocolonialism?

The Wheels of co-learning by examples and practice

My humble suggestion is to consider following the '*Atla'gimma*' way of ecosocial and eco-legal succession in practices of resurgence and reconciliation. These practices consist in *non-cooperation* with the vicious social systems as much as possible. Second, they consist in generating and regenerating communities of practice and partnerships of "being the change" in as many areas of life as possible. These can be exercised both apart from and sometimes within the dominant social, legal and governmental systems. They involve participating in dialogue practices of interdependent partners in the canoes in which we find ourselves; and exploring the vicious and virtuous relationships in which they are entangled from their diverse subject positions and perspectives.

Such dialogues also include histories or genealogies of these relationships both locally and more broadly: dispossession, genocide, inequality, racism, treaties and failed treaties, truth and reconciliation commissions, enquiries into missing and murdered Indigenous girls and women, and self-government, land-back and land-sharing, and Indigenous law negotiations and agreements (successes and failures); and histories of the ecoregions in which we live and the virtuous and vicious ecosocial relationships of the human inhabitants of them; among other relationships. (I think this is what Ry Moran calls 'truth before reconciliation.')

As the participants pass the linguistic and perceptual talking stick around, the participants begin to co-generate a shared multi-perspectival and multispecies understanding of the world of entangled relationships in which they live and their places within them. These are places of relational interdependency and vulnerability. But, they are now also the disclosed places of situated opportunities to engage in practices of the freedom of thinking and acting differently with and for each other here and now - in and on the vicious and virtuous ecosocial relationship of which they are co-subjects. They then learn from their successes and failures in practice, and begin the cycle again, as in the *Spirit of the Haida Gwaii* canoe, which "goes on forever, in the same place."

This is how ecosocial succession mimics ecological succession and evolution. It involves the cultivation and exercise of the kinds of *symbiotic ethos* appropriate to the ecosocial relationships in which we find ourselves. These wheels of symbiotic ethics take many different forms in practice. The well-known “*Wheels*” of Val Napoleon and Hadley Friedland and their many students and community partners are exemplary of these self-liberating, virtuous cycles.

Finally, I also think there is a distinct kind of ‘*contestation-with*’ practice that grows out of the symbiotic ethos that animates these ‘circles’ of noncooperation, decolonization, and constructive communities of practice. It is important because, as we have seen, the extractive and antagonistic form of power is predatorial. It tries to neo-colonize and prey on the symbiotic practices of regeneration.

This mode of contestation-with is as diverse as the biodiverse relationships in which it is enacted, so it is difficult to generalize. Nevertheless, I think the basic idea is to attempt to ‘compel’ (without coercing) a perceived ‘opponent’ to see the viciousness and predatorial character (*animosity*) of their habitual way of life, and the hypocritical kind of ‘partnership’ they are offering, *by enacting symbiosis* in the mode of contestation. The aim is to show clearly the superiority of the alternative, virtuous way of life and democratic partnership you are offering to them by simply being the change. This can be effective precisely because we animals learn by examples and practice; not by rules.

This exemplary contestatory ethos can be shown in a dramatic and ‘compelling’ manner in three ways. The first is simply to point to all the resurgent communities of ecosocial practice that are being generated and extended across Canada today – as well as their complex histories. That is, it shows the opponent that symbiotic relationships work in practice. “Another world is not only possible, but actual.”

The second way is to interact by *enacting* the gift-gratitude-reciprocity ethos of being-with-relatives in the relations with the ‘opponent.’ That is, the ‘opponent’ is treated as if they are already a ‘partner’ in a symbiotic relationship. They are not treated as an ‘other,’ but as a ‘partner-to-become.’ This generates trust, and it also begins to weave the partner into being-with conciliatory relationships of contestation, and away from their adversarial stance.

The third dimension is that all you ask is for the ‘partner-to-be’ to enter genuine dialogues of possible reconciliation with all-affected living beings: dialogues in which each shares the truth as they see it from their perspective and listens attentively to others in turn.

These three *exemplars* of symbiosis-in-action begin to move the partner to see the interaction differently. Perhaps it even moves the partner to engage in proprioception.

I think this exemplary mode of interaction is consistent with 'being the change' and ecosocial succession. It is similar to ethical jiu-jitsu, in which the master enacts a mutually-caring mode of conflict resolution contra the violent opponent. I see it as a way of trying to suggest and move the opponent to see, experience and realize the more powerful animacy of a *symbiotic ethos* in contrast to their antagonistic ethos.

To conclude, I discuss 4 seeds and 6 tools that are being used within the law to bring about change in the McGill Law article I recommended. The important point is that there are thousands of examples to learn from, and many more being co-generated every day.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss a few of the important issues that Maneesha Deckha's work and the work of others raise for us. My comments from my limited perspective are just rough sketches. I look forward to your comments from your perspectives in helping me to see the mistakes and limitations in mine.

This lecture is in offered in memory of TEMOSENTAT, Dr. Charles Elliott, renowned Tsartlip carver, artist, elder, and teacher, who passed on February 1, 2023.