

Nature Is Our Home

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Mni Sota Makoce is my home. A land with waters so beautiful they reflect the clouds in the sky. Something so sacred must be protected.

I never used to pay attention to the changes in our weather. Minnesota's always had warm summers, cold winters, and can't seem to decide when it's spring. I think I first noticed change two summers ago when one of my hens fainted from heat stroke and died, and the others could hardly breathe. It's only become more obvious now that our winters are less white, the ice is so thin, and spring is becoming colder. I can see the impact of the drought we experienced this summer. The smoke from Canada's wildfires altered the color of the sky, our air quality deteriorated, and animals began to drink from our chlorine pools out of thirst. It's impossible not to see that our world is changing. Our home will die unless we find a way.

Close to my house are woods where the neighborhood children play. Kids on their four-wheelers race across the sandpit while others walk through the trails. It's small compared to the forest in Bunker Hills where I grew up playing 'warrior' with the other boys, pretending to be one with nature and reconnecting to it in any way we could. No matter how small, these woods are important to every one of us who lives here. I've found my own special place there where I can sit quietly and listen to the song of the Earth, remembering that I'm a part of it. Recently, the woods have been cut down to half their size to make room for a bigger gas station. I sit in my special spot and mourn the trees I will never see again and feel the emptiness in the forest as it continuously loses parts of itself. I'm so grateful for that special spot I have there and can't imagine losing it, like how I can't imagine a winter with no snow, or a sky vacant of the birds' song.

Something that was once so sacred has been taken for granted. With each part of Earth we lose, our people weep, and every living creature its native cry as our hearts grieve and our home dies. I am one child. There is no war I can win, no land I can save all alone. There is no one person at fault, but each of us is responsible. God made humans different from our other animal relatives so we could protect our home, not destroy it. As a species, we've lost our connection to Earth. It may be hard to believe, but humans are a part of nature. It's where we all come from if you look back far enough. The amount of disconnect has left the human race in chaos and corruption. We no longer come to nature for our needs but take. We've forgotten what's important in life and who we owe that life to: Our home.

There is hope. In an ancient prophecy from the Ojibwe, seven prophets told them what would become of Earth. The first told them they would leave their homes for a new land following a megis, the second said that they would be guided by a little boy back onto the path when they were lost, and the third that they would know they were home when they found food that grows on water. The fourth prophet warned about a new race of people that would change everything, the fifth said there would be a struggle between abandoning our old ways and adopting new ones, and finally, the sixth promised a time of death when Earth would be out of balance full of chaos and grief. Right now, we are in the time the sixth prophet promised would come, but the last prophet, the seventh, promised hope. Promised that through the despair, we would return to our old ways, searching to repair our broken connection to our home.

Life is strange. Our world is so beautiful because of the pain we persevere through. You need rain for the flowers to grow, and it's only after a storm that you see a rainbow. We're in a dark time right now, but no matter how long and dark the night is, after every sunset is a sunrise. Our home is dying because we've forgotten who we are and our place in the world. Together, we can remember, and if we all show love and respect for Earth and change some of our ways for the better, it will heal. The time of the seventh prophet is close.