

THE KINSHIP WAY



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The Kinship Way:

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Chapter 1: What the World Needs Now

We live in a time of deep fragmentation -social, ecological and spiritual -. The Kinship Way arises in response to this crisis. It is not a return to the past, but a deep collective evocation of how to live well with each other and with the Earth.

Welcome to The Kinship Way, a completely new way for humanity to arrange ourselves into a coherent circle of relationships that gives us all a new chance, collectively and individually, to live up to the potential given to us by our creator. The Kinship Way is taken from many models of traditional indigenous governance, providing each member with many benefits, as well as teaching how to live within natural laws that ultimately create our cradle of civilized relationships.

The Kinship Way provides a path of relationship and reconciliation between peoples of all cultures and races for the systems to be fair, equitable, and determined by the people themselves.

As in indigenous peoples' philosophy,

WE ARE ALL RELATED

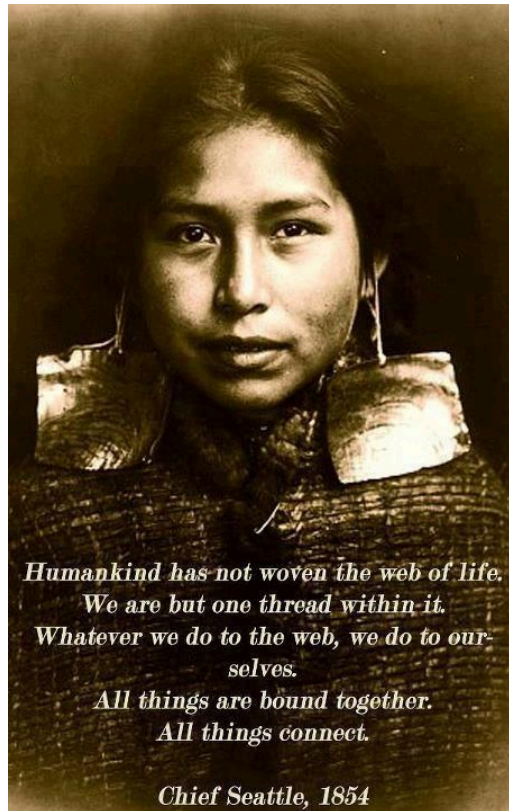
Born out of Indigenous lifeways, this vision emerged during a time of global pause and personal healing. It carries the medicine of circles, councils, and stories that have long guided humanity toward balance.

This idea was born from several inspirations but is mostly attributable to 'spirit', that mysterious force in our lives that we should listen to with humility.

It also comes from my love of and respect for my people, the Anishinaabeg of the Great Lakes region of North America, and our doodemag system that pre-dates colonialism. Also known as a clan system, it provided guidance and stability to our everyday lives and helped all of us to know our roles and responsibilities as we moved through life. It also helped all clan members know the parts of society to which they are meant to contribute to the best of their ability, building on their strengths and talents.

As I was listening to conference presenters at the 7th Generation Bioregional Earth Summit 2024, I heard various speakers talk about how we need to put lots of effort towards stewarding and healing large parts of our ecosystem that have been damaged by industrialism and colonialism. The speakers were both Indigenous and non, and as I

heard the Indigenous presenters speak, each one began their presentation by giving their name, their place of origin and their clan affiliation. When I heard the main presenter stating that we needed a way to help connect people to the land and restoration work, it occurred to me that the answer had already been spoken by the Indigenous presenters - the best way forward is the clan system! Clans effectively tie you to family, land and your specific role. This includes the natural world as the inspiration to help humans understand their connection to the web of life.



This need for connection was heightened by the pandemic. With people everywhere feeling so disconnected, isolated and lonely. With so many people suffering, it occurred to me that we needed an antidote that connected us into a community of caring and peer support. Most of all, I was totally convinced that we need to co-create a self-governing society that is prosperous and stable for the wellbeing of the children of the world and the next seven generations to come

Chapter 2: Indigenous Foundations and the Clan Model

The Kinship Way draws from ancient clan systems that governed with wisdom, ceremony, and collective care. Clans were not only extended families—they were responsibilities. They formed sacred relationships with the land, with animals, and with the unseen world. In the Anishinaabeg doodemag system, the animal emblems denoted the responsibilities of the members. For instance:

Crane	Chieftainship: A leader who travels so high as to see all of the land and creation. Their cry calls the people together.
Loon	Chieftainship: A leader on both the land and water. They wear the colours of leadership in their plumage which is adorned in sacred shell patterns.
Fish	Philosophers and Mediators. The visionaries, dreamers, philosophers, and thinkers, those with greater vision.
Bear	Guardians and Healers: Guardians of the 'lodge of life' that ensures harmony medicine people and natural healers.
Marten	Warriors: They are hunters, providers, protectors, strategists that maintain the well being of the people as peaceful warriors.
Deer	Dancers, singers, peaceful people: They maintain harmony, they balance through the creation of music, dance, storytelling and poetry and the appreciation of beauty, kindness and sharing.
Bird	Spiritualists, pursuers of knowledge: planters and growers, educators, spreading the seed of knowledge.

Further Indigenous wisdom shows us the experience of the Haudenosaunee people, whose story includes;

Long ago, the Haudenosaunee Nations were at war with each other. A man called the Peacemaker wanted to spread peace and unity throughout Haudenosaunee territory. While on his journey, the Peacemaker came to the house of an Onondaga leader named Hayo'wetha (hi-an-WEN-ta), more commonly known as Hiawatha. Hayo'wetha believed in the message of peace and wanted the Haudenosaunee people to live in a united way. An evil Onondaga leader called Tadadaho, who hated the message of peace, had killed Hayo'wetha's wife and daughters during the violent times. Tadadaho was feared by all; he was perceived as being so evil that his hair consisted of writhing snakes, symbolizing his twisted mind.

The Peacemaker helped Hayo'wetha mourn his loss and ease his pain. Hayo'wetha then traveled with the Peacemaker to help unite the Haudenosaunee. The Peacemaker used arrows to demonstrate the strength of unity. First, he took a single arrow and broke it in half. Then he took five arrows and tied them together. This group of five arrows could not be broken. The Peacemaker said, "A single arrow is weak and easily broken. A bundle of arrows tied together cannot be broken. This represents the strength of having a confederacy. It is strong and cannot

be broken.” The Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca, and Onondaga accepted the message of peace.

Chapter 3: Guiding Principles of Kinship

Kinship begins with the principle that all life is related. It is not a metaphor—it is a worldview. Each action, decision, and relationship in The Kinship Way is guided by values such as respect, reciprocity, humility, accountability, and equity.

Humanity can draw upon the enduring legacy of indigenous peoples worldwide, who masterfully employed such systems to organize themselves and to disseminate knowledge, standards, stories, observances, responsibilities, and protocols. One of the main features of a kinship system is the creation of relationships among members and in relation to members of other kinship groups. All members of the same kin group, no matter where they are in the world, are ‘kin’ to one another. The relationship of brotherhood and sisterhood is promoted as the ideal because it is important that everyone experiences a feeling of belonging and connection in the world.

However, personal autonomy and personal boundaries are always respected because each being is naturally endowed with a sense of sovereign-self and the right to personal self-actualization within mutually agreed upon societal boundaries, such as “do as thou wilt and harm none”.

In many Indigenous cultures, being a member of a kin group confers certain privileges, such as being in council with other members to inform the Headman and/or Headwoman of the kin group about the state of wellbeing within the group and about measures needed to enhance the wellbeing of the group as a whole. It would also include the right to assistance with matters such as housing and food, as well as medical and spiritual care.

The Kinship Way embraces a new way of introducing ourselves, a practice that honors and deepens our connection to place and our vital role in restoring the relationship with the land. As a member taking part in council, you will rise and share:

- Your name.
- Your kinship group.
- Your watershed and bioregion, acknowledging the land you belong to.
- Your age advisory council designation (youth, adult, middle, senior, or elder).

A statement about your relationship to your bioregion, articulating your commitment to representing and stewarding a chosen species or element of the ecosystem.

This act of sharing underscores our belonging to our kin, establishes our connection to the land, and reinforces our commitment to being mindful and responsible stewards of the earth and all its relations.

Finally, every community that becomes a Community of Care and has all 12 kinship groups in operation, if it has an opportunity to choose a name, should make reference to the watershed it is in, in its name.

Chapter 4: The 12 Kinship Groups

The Kinship Way presents a framework for organizing society into 12 Kinship Groups, drawing upon the inherent wisdom and interconnectedness of the natural world. This system is deeply rooted in three sacred realms: Sky, Earth, and Water, each represented by a powerful and globally recognized icon: the Thunderbird, the Oak Tree, and the Whale.

1. The Sky Realm: Thunderbird, Symbol of Power

- The Thunderbird, a revered figure in numerous Native American cultures, embodies power, strength, and protection. Its association with the sky realm reflects its connection to weather and the spiritual forces that govern the upper world.
- Within the Kinship Way, the Thunderbird represents the power inherent in the sky realm – the dynamic forces that influence and shape existence.

2. The Earth Realm: Oak Tree, Symbol of Resilience

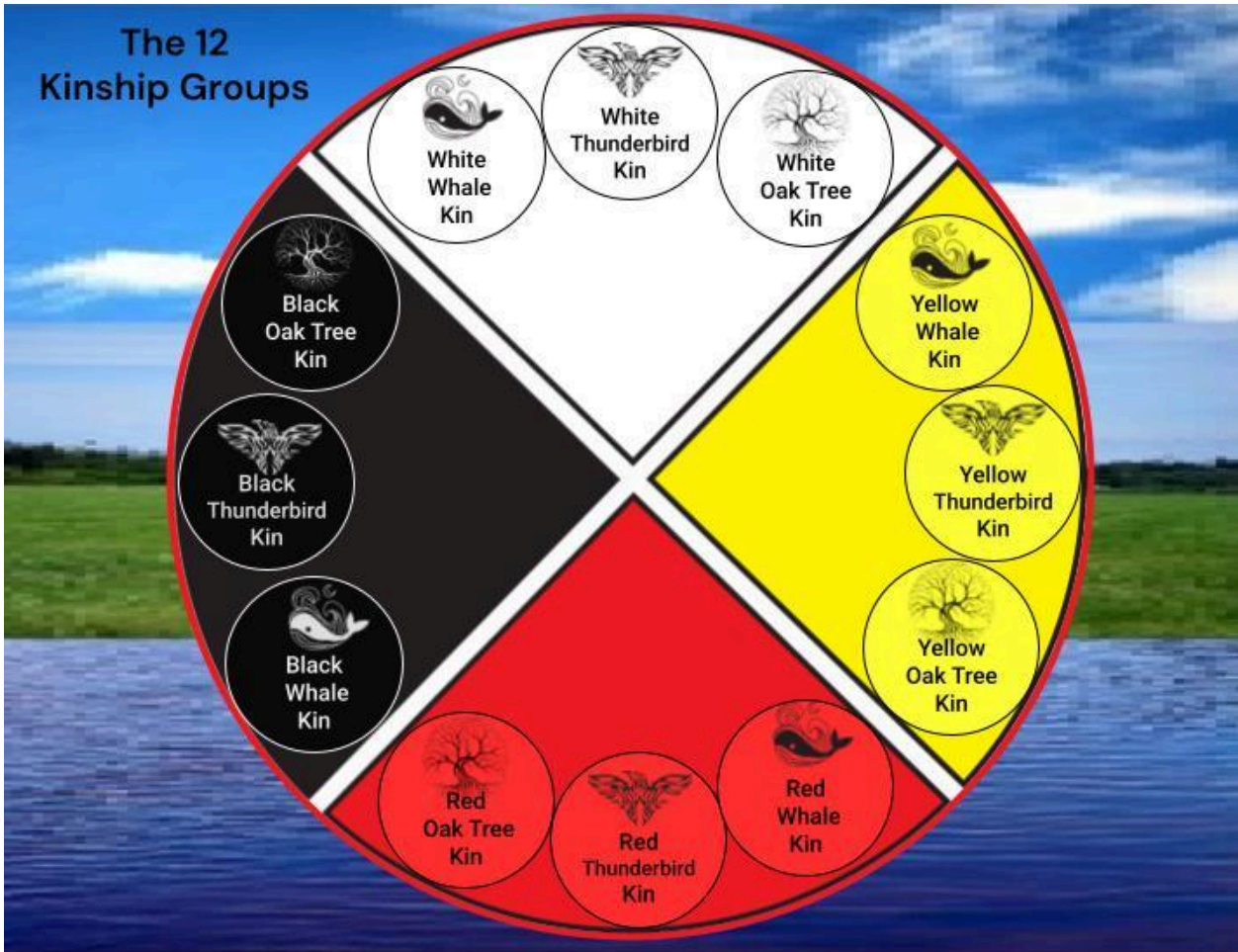
- The oak tree, a global symbol of strength, endurance, and longevity, represents the Earth Realm and the concept of resilience. Found on nearly every continent, oak trees are critical keystone species, supporting diverse ecosystems by providing food and shelter to countless organisms, forming the base of many food chains.
- Its deep roots and widespread presence make it a fitting symbol for the Earth's enduring strength and the resilience of life itself. The oak's "Tree of Life" symbolism resonates across cultures, highlighting its deep connection to the Earth's cycles and interconnectedness.

3. The Water Realm: Whale, Symbol of Wisdom

- Whales, inhabitants of every ocean, represent the Water Realm and the profound wisdom it embodies. Their deep dives into the ocean's mysteries evoke a sense of ancient knowledge and connection to the unconscious.
- Beyond their symbolic value, whales play a vital ecological role. As keystone species, their feces fertilize phytoplankton, which forms the base of the ocean's food chain and plays a critical role in carbon sequestration and creating oxygen. This interconnectedness underscores the profound wisdom inherent in the Water Realm and its vital importance to the planet's health.

The Medicine Wheel and Kin Group Collaboration

- The Kinship Way further divides each of the three realms into four kin groups, based on the colors of the Medicine Wheel. This powerful symbol, representing the four directions and various aspects of the human experience like life stages, seasons, and elements, provides a framework for understanding and organizing these groups.
- By aligning individuals with specific kin groups based on these principles, the Kinship Way fosters opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. Different groups, each possessing unique strengths associated with their realm and direction, can work together to achieve community goals, ensure equity, and maintain balance. For example, youth and elders sharing the same direction can combine their unique perspectives and abilities to address common needs, highlighting the system's focus on intergenerational collaboration and wisdom sharing.



In essence, the Kinship Way, by integrating the globally recognized symbolism of the Thunderbird, Oak Tree, and Whale with the profound insights of the Medicine Wheel, provides a framework for creating a society built upon interconnectedness, mutual respect, and a deep understanding of the natural world. It emphasizes the importance of learning from and collaborating with all members of the community, human and non-human, to ensure a sustainable and harmonious future. Our imagination is the only limit to the different ways we can make connections that will serve our needs and ensure equity and balance within the community.

3 Realms are recognized in The Kinship Way

The Sky Realm



No matter where you live on earth:

There is Sky and Land and Water
We all have these in common.

These are Life's Basic Elements:
Air, Water, Soil / Place

& The Sun provides the Fire,
The Energy for all of these:

The Land Realm



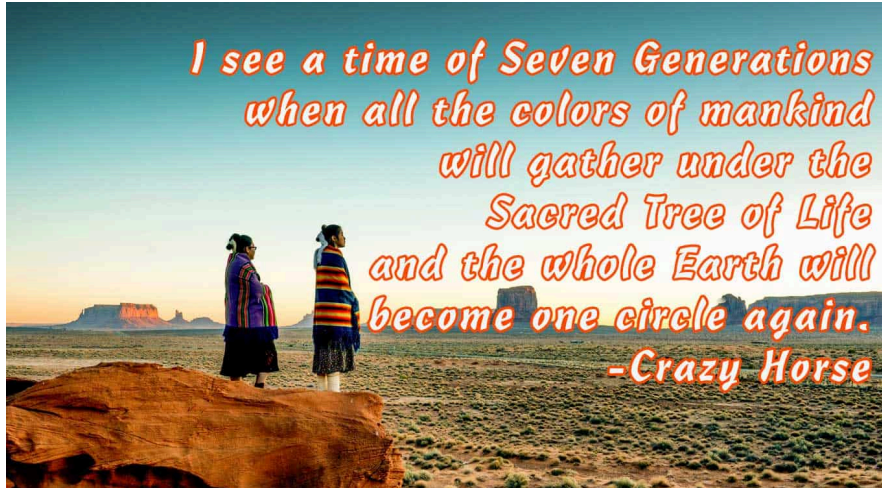
The Water Realm



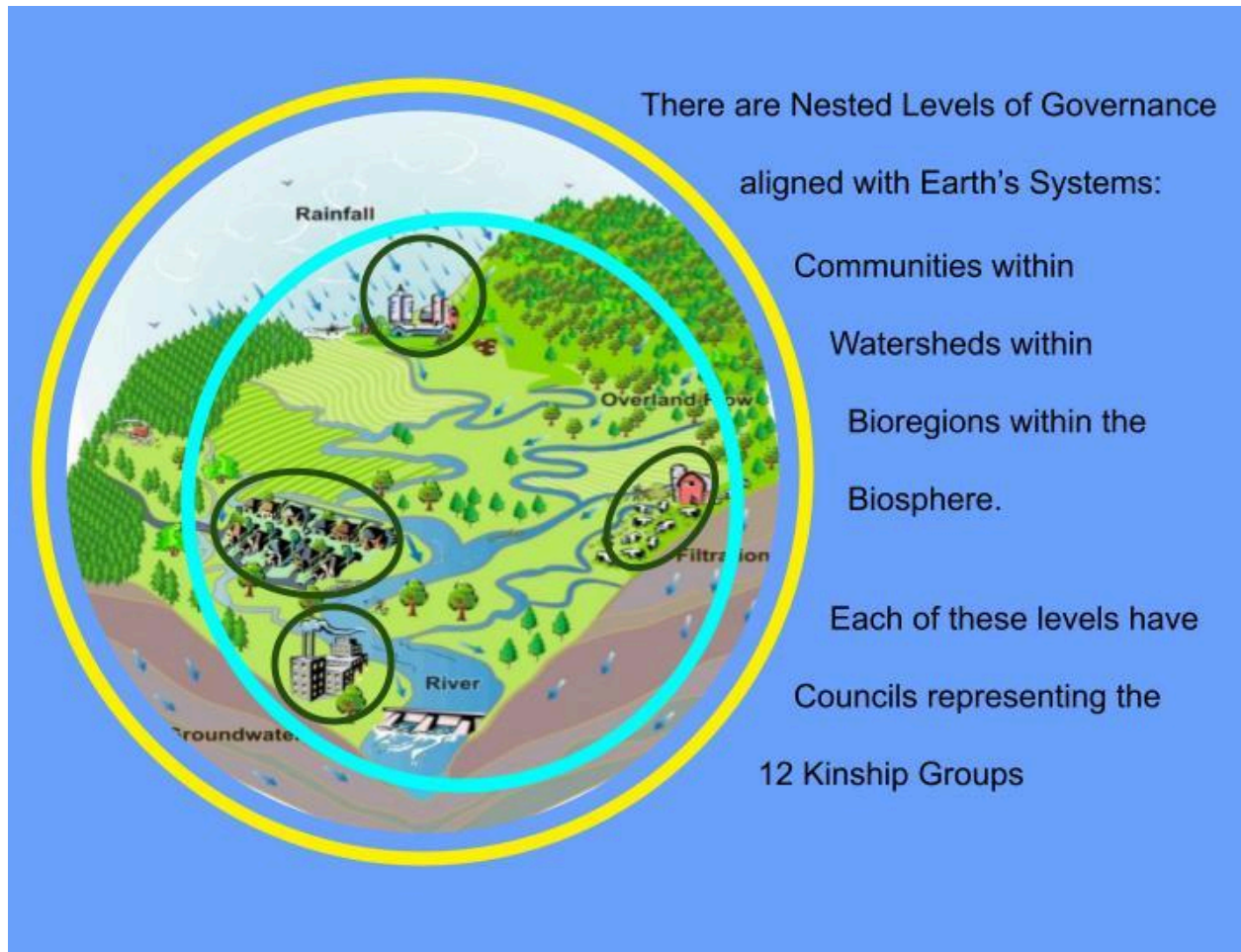
**Unity does not mean
sameness. It means
oneness of purpose.**

Priscilla Shirer

quoteancy



The Kinship Way operates across five levels of organization: Community, Watershed, Bioregion, Continent, and Global. Each level contains councils composed of delegates from the levels below. This structure supports shared wisdom, localized autonomy, and planetary solidarity.



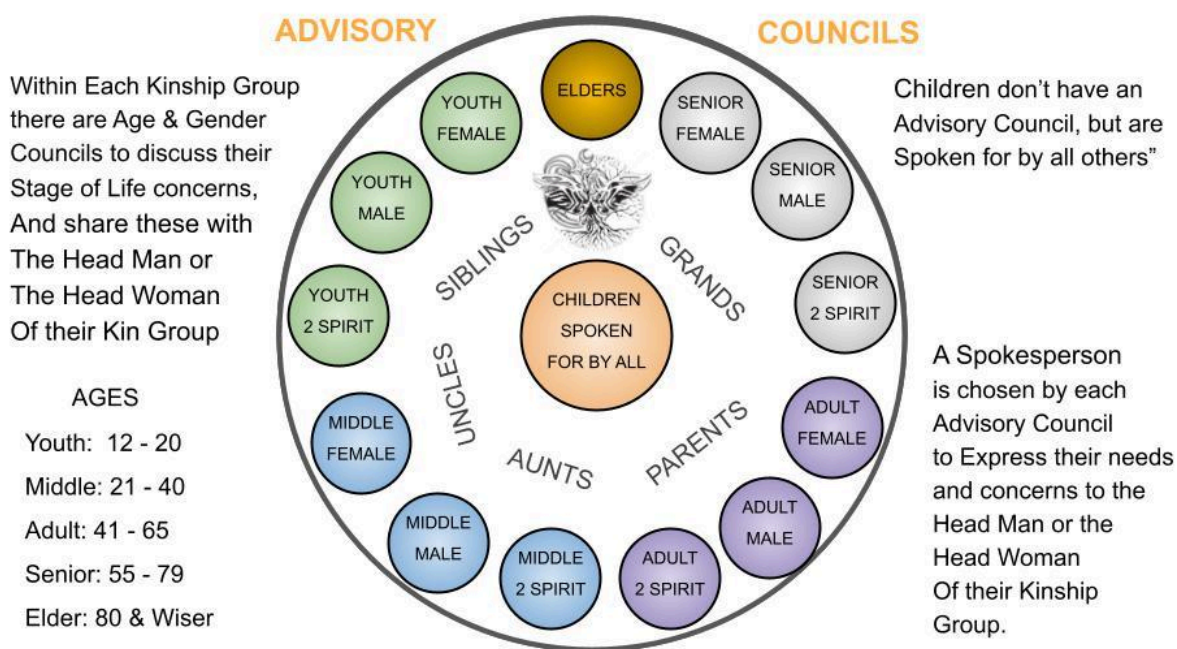
The Kinship Way mirrors the sacred geometry of nature, specifically the three realms (Sky, Earth, Water), the four directions, and the four elements. Together they form a wheel of balance. Each Kinship Group carries directional medicine, elemental responsibility, and symbolic power.

Chapter 5 : Advisory Councils & Life Stages

Each Kinship Group includes up to 10 advisory councils reflecting age, gender, and special knowledge. Life stages (Children, Youth, Adults, Elders) provide rhythm and guidance. Gender-diverse, Two-Spirit, and cultural councils ensure every voice is heard. Children under 12 are not expected to take part in council because they deserve to have a childhood where their main focus is to play and learn, in safety and without burden. Children will observe and internalize watching adults behave in a responsible way and will aim to emulate the good qualities they see. They will have a chance to anticipate becoming an adult by knowing that they will be joining a Kin Group at age 12,

with appropriate rites of passage and ceremony, as they are inducted into their new relationship with Kin.

Head Man and Head Woman are selected by each Kin Group. These two representatives sit in Council with all the other Head Men and Head Women chosen to represent their Kin Group. A circle of 24 wise, compassionate people who take their Kin Group's thoughts and concerns to the whole Community of Care Council to share and to determine the way forward. Outside this Community of Care Councils are others of the same nature within the same Watershed. This group will choose two from among them, a man and a woman, to represent at the greater Watershed level. When convened this group works together to consider all of the needs of the Watershed as a whole. When all of the Watersheds of one source need to gather, these different groups can choose the representatives to send 'upward' to the larger council gatherings so that all people are represented at whatever level the councils are being held.



Chapter 6: The Wheel of Kinship Co-Creation

The Wheel unites the 12 Kinship Groups into a Community of Care. It maps each group's contribution to societal well-being, including food systems, healing, governance, culture, and ceremony. This ensures that all domains of life are accounted for. Having twelve kinship groups allows each group to have responsibility for one area of a functioning society, (as detailed below). When a kinship group has taken responsibility

for one of the 12 areas of society, it strives to maintain a diligent watch over the functioning of that sector, so that it serves efficiently and meets or exceeds the expectations of the whole community. These kinds of actions can bring honors and rewards to the group.

Co-Creation Circle by Barbara Marx Hubbard

The Web of Connections
show how these areas
are Integrated aspects of
Wholeness, rather than
Silos.

Every community and
every initiative needs
all these aspects to
be successful. Thus
the Kinship Groups
are interdependent,
And their Initiatives
can be holistic.

* Notice how the areas
of society that lay directly
across the circle from each other
relate or rely on each other.



Chapter 7: Roles, Honours, and Responsibility

Rather than hierarchical titles, The Kinship Way recognizes roles through ceremony, merit, and council affirmation. Honours are given as recognition of achievement, merit and community service. They are not entitlements.

The 12 Primary Kin Groups would be constructed by being blind to every other separating factor that had existed in the world. Gone would be race, religion, class, and nation. In its place would be relatedness via kinship group, inclusion, roles and responsibility according to ability. Individuals can keep whatever faith or belief

previously held, but separation or division based on external factors may exit gracefully. Every person will be encouraged to bring honours to their kin group, by contributing towards achieving the specific goals and responsibilities of their group, even if it is not related to their career or vocation. Honours can also be gained by undertaking skills development and other valuable accomplishments. Being that Communities of Care have all kin groups within them, and all settlements are defined by the watershed they occupy, those who work to keep the watershed healthy and respected gain honours for being a good example to the children and other adults.

There are other important roles that can be assumed in each kin group, such as scout, peacekeeper, Grandmother and Grandfather, healer, birth helper, timekeeper, knowledge keeper, ceremony keeper, fire keeper, water keeper. Such concepts can extend to species protectors, animal trainers and keepers, food growers and keepers, medicine gatherers, children's guides, in addition to typical vocations. It becomes a matter of needs and wants, derived from our human imagination and creativity and the imperative to respond to the needs of everyone.

Children are central to every Kinship Circle. The system plans with the next seven generations in mind. Rites of passage, mentorship, and land-based learning are essential. We build what we will never see completed—this is our sacred task. Together we will decide how we will educate our children to have the best chance at being a healthy and contributing member of society. Together we will decide how to provide health and wellness care and nourishing environments for their growth and development. Children will be raised by their parents or other caregivers until they are ready to be independent. When a child has been formally inducted into a Kin Group then that child is taught the 'ways' of that Kin Group and joins the Youth Council. The child's Kin Group has the responsibility to look to the child's eventual home needs and ongoing educational attainment. The young person can be offered mentorship or vocation opportunities fostered by their Kin Group or from anyone in the whole Community of Care.

Chapter 8: Inclusivity

People might live in different neighborhoods or areas with varying local concerns (e.g., proximity to resources, specific environmental issues, local infrastructure needs). Ensuring representation of diverse demographics and localized perspectives will be important.

Occupation/Expertise: Different occupations often bring unique perspectives, skills, and knowledge to problem-solving. While related to socio-economic status, explicitly

considering a spread of occupations (e.g., farmers, educators, healthcare providers, artists, engineers, traditional knowledge keepers) could enrich discussions and solutions, especially for ecological systems.

Family Structure/Parental Status: Perspectives of single parents, multi-generational households, or individuals without children can differ significantly regarding community resources, childcare, education, and support systems and will be honoured.

Digital Literacy/Access to Technology: In an increasingly digital world, access to and proficiency with technology can significantly impact participation and influence. Ensuring representation across the spectrum of digital literacy could address potential barriers to engagement.

Past Experiences/History with the Community: Individuals who are long-time residents might have a deep understanding of historical contexts and community memory, while newer residents might bring fresh perspectives. Balancing these different levels of community tenure could be beneficial.

Specific Vulnerabilities/Marginalized Groups: While "ability-disability" and "socio-economic status" cover much, consider if there are other specific, locally relevant marginalized groups that might need explicit attention. This could include, for example, refugees, prisoners, those in hospital or long term care or those experiencing homelessness.

Relationship to the Land/Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Given the emphasis on "ecological systems of the land," explicitly ensuring the inclusion of individuals with deep traditional ecological knowledge, especially from indigenous or long-standing local cultures, is crucial for truly integrated governance. While "culture" may encompass this, it's worth highlighting its specific importance here.

Key Principle for Demographics: The goal isn't just to list categories, but to ensure that the diversity of lived experiences and perspectives that influence how people perceive problems and propose solutions are adequately represented. The "random selection with adjustments for equitable distribution" is a strong mechanism for this.

Chapter 9: Transparent & Participatory Decision-Making

The Kinship Way uses consensus, consent, and token-weighted voting. Circles strive to make decisions in alignment with truth, balance, and spirit. Decision tools and protocols are visible to all and designed to include marginalized voices.

The Kinship Way is a system of governance that emphasizes collaboration and collective decision-making, particularly within decentralized or community-based structures. It combines elements of consensus, consent, and token-weighted voting to create a framework that aims to be both effective and inclusive.

1. Decision-Making Methods:

- **Consensus:** This method seeks to achieve agreement by all members of a group, rather than simply relying on majority rule. It encourages active listening, open communication, and patience, with a focus on finding solutions that satisfy everyone to the greatest extent possible.
- **Consent:** Consent, within the Kinship Way, means that decisions reflect broad agreement, and participants acknowledge that the proposed action is acceptable, even if it's not their personal ideal. It's about finding a common ground that allows the group to move forward, focusing on the next viable step.
- **Values weighted Tokens Voting** provides everyone with a million tokens monthly. Participants find a published list on a website which brings together all of the ideas generated by the kinship groups through their advisory circles. Each person anonymously deploys their tokens to the ideas they most support, indicated by the number of tokens they deploy. The only identifier they provide is their kinship group affiliation. This helps to bring honor to the groups most participatory in the effort to ultimately decide where the whole community deploys its resources. The website tallies the numbers in real time and participants can see which ideas are rising to the top, and deploy their own tokens according to their own priorities. This promotes fairness, participation and the ability to move forward with confidence.

2. Councils and Decision Alignment:

- **Councils** refer to different groups or units within the Kinship Way structure. These councils strive to make decisions that align with truth, balance, and spirit, reflecting a focus on ethical considerations, community well-being, and potentially spiritual or cultural values.
- **Truth, Balance, and Spirit:** These principles emphasize a holistic approach to decision-making, where the social, ethical, and spiritual implications of decisions are considered alongside practical and logistical factors.

3. Visibility and Inclusion:

- **Visible Tools and Protocols:** Decision-making tools and protocols are made transparent and accessible to everyone within the Kinship Way. This helps to

ensure accountability and allows all participants to understand how decisions are made.

- Inclusion of Marginalized Voices: The design of the system aims to include voices that may be overlooked in traditional decision-making processes. This is achieved by creating mechanisms and processes that allow diverse perspectives to be heard and considered.

The Kinship Way represents a multifaceted approach to governance that prioritizes collaborative decision-making, ethical considerations, and inclusivity. By combining elements of consensus, consent, and weighted voting, it aims to create a system that fosters a culture of shared responsibility and collective wisdom. The visibility of tools and the emphasis on including marginalized voices are key components of this approach, ensuring that decisions are made in a way that is both effective and equitable.

Chapter 10: Starting a Kinship Circle

Circles begin with an interest in becoming a member and then a group of people come together with intention. An individual can use the website to discover their kin group, or in case of in person organizing, they can draw the name of their Kin Group ‘from a hat’ so to speak, and sit with their group as a whole, and later with their Life Stage Advisory Group. They can hold ceremonies, and begin identifying their gifts, needs, and resources.

The Kinship Way grows organically—one circle at a time. A Hylo website (<https://www.hylo.com/groups/the-kinship-way-by-becky-big-canoë/chat/general>) has been set up where everyone can go to sign up and discover which Kin Group they will belong to. Then they can use this website to find other members in their region and their own Community of Care will be built where they live. They will be able to use the website for many other functions as well, especially to organize meetings and Kin Group meetups so that the work and the joy of organizing to meet needs locally can begin.

Chapter 11: How to Hold Council

Councils operate in a sacred, egalitarian format. A talking piece such as a feather or a ‘talking stick’ is used and during council, the one who is holding it has the floor. Listening rounds, and consensus-building guide the flow. Councils honor time, spirit, and silence. They are not meetings—they are ceremonies of shared wisdom. Every Advisory Group can plan their meeting schedule and decide how they want their

information shared with the representative Head Man and Head Woman of their Kin Group.

Sample Council Agenda

1. Opening Prayer or Song
2. Round of Gratitude or Check-in
3. Review of Previous Intentions or Agreements
4. New Proposals
5. Open Discussion or Storytelling Round
6. Decision-Making Round (Consensus or Vote)
7. Closing Reflection / Ceremony

The group has the right to record their meetings in various ways and can build an archive of their encounters. The important thing is that everyone has an opportunity to share and be heard and contribute as they see fit.

Taking Inventory: Needs, Gifts, Commons

Each circle begins by taking stock: What do we need? What do we have? What can we share? This includes land, knowledge, skills, and materials. The commons is the heart of kinship. Everything we do strengthens the whole.

Taking Stock: Asset Inventory and Community Vitality

To thrive as a community, we must first take stock of the resources and assets we hold—not just money and property, but the full range of human, environmental, and cultural assets available to us. This includes the collective power of people, their time, energy, know-how, and skills. Many hands make light work, and when everyone contributes even a small amount, the impact can be significant. It is crucial to expand our understanding of wealth beyond just monetary value and recognize the potential of local resources, which can be exchanged with or without money.

When financial resources are in short supply, we must create new, localized currencies or systems of exchange. These currencies should allow the community to tap into the wealth of skills, labor, and unused assets—whether it's land sharing, vacant buildings, or neglected lots. For instance, people's power is abundant in our community, and labor can be exchanged for mutual benefit, without being trapped in the limitations of traditional economic systems.

Addressing the Needs of the Land and the Community

As we evaluate our assets, it is equally important to assess the needs of the land and the community. What does the land require to maintain its health and sustainability? What are the immediate and long-term needs of the people who inhabit it? We must ensure that our community is not only able to care for itself but that the land, waters, and air are restored and cared for in ways that benefit all life within the region. This includes examining the health of the bioregion, its watersheds, and its ecosystems. Are trade agreements or diplomatic relations needed between neighboring bioregions to ensure the balance of resources and support the health of ecosystems? To answer these questions, we must take inventory of the multiple forms of capital in the community, from human talent to environmental resilience.

The Strength of Diversity

Diversity strengthens resilience. A community that embraces a variety of cultures, languages, and faiths is more likely to adapt to change and overcome challenges. We must assess how many cultures and languages exist within our community and how the biodiversity of the watershed and bioregion contribute to ecological resilience. Bridging language barriers and providing tools for intercultural understanding are key to fostering inclusivity and ensuring that all voices are heard.

Land Stewardship and Ecological Health

The wellbeing of the land is paramount. This includes the health and quality of the water, the fertility of the soil, and the overall vitality of the ecosystems we rely on. We must assess how well vegetation, such as forests, can manage the water cycle, cleanse the air, and regulate drought and flood conditions. Additionally, the balance of nutrient cycles—such as carbon and nitrogen—must be monitored and restored, where necessary, to support long-term ecological health.

As we consider land use, we must ask ourselves: How can humans integrate with the land in a co-beneficial relationship that supports both people and ecosystems? This integration involves protecting natural resources through balanced, non-extractive practices that respect the environment and maintain its regenerative capacity.

Resource Sheds: Evolving Toward Sustainability and Regeneration

Our community must develop sustainable, regenerative, and resilient resource flows. These include:

Watersheds: Ensuring clean, accessible water for all.

Energy Networks: Harnessing the power of the sun, wind, water, gravity, and biological processes to generate life-sustaining energy.

Food Sheds: Creating sustainable food systems that return nutrients to the soil.

Fiber Sheds: Fostering regenerative fiber systems that allow for textile production and recycling.

Transportation and Tools: Developing sustainable infrastructure for people and resources to move freely.

The goal is for these resources to meet the needs of the community and do so in ways that respect and support the ecosystems in which they are embedded. Each resource shed must be self-sustaining, enhancing the health of the bioregion while providing for its inhabitants.

Human Abilities: Harnessing Skills and Expertise

The community's wealth is also found in the skills, professions, and talents of its people. From educators to builders, healers to artists, our collective abilities shape the vibrancy of the community. We must assess what skills are needed to address the community's challenges and match them with the expertise available. Some individuals may need access to resources—such as safe spaces to care for children, tools for digital work, or land to teach permaculture—to contribute their talents fully.

Moreover, we must understand what is required for individuals to share their abilities and talents in meaningful ways. This could include addressing issues of access to education, resources, or caregiving support.

Currency and Mediums of Exchange

In a community with ample natural resources, skills, and labor but limited traditional money, we need to create new mediums of exchange. These can take various forms, such as digital currencies, local exchange systems, or even traditional barter. The key is to ensure that these systems do not create debt traps or cause undue stress on families and individuals but instead promote mutual support and the flow of resources.

We must examine the potential for closed-loop currencies, coupons, promissory credit notes, or community-based currencies that can circulate wealth within the community, allowing people to access the resources they need while contributing their time and skills.

Education and Training: Learning for Regeneration

Education and training must reflect the regenerative values of the community.

Immersive environmental education should focus on teaching care for the land, water, and air—helping people live as co-beneficial elements within the ecosystems they inhabit. In addition, intergenerational education must ensure that the wisdom of past generations is not forgotten but passed down to younger generations through embodied skills, creativity, and spiritual teachings.

Guilds and Collaborative Networks

Guilds within the bioregion can play a crucial role in knowledge sharing and resource distribution. These guilds, such as those focused on natural building, regenerative textiles, or farming, collaborate to create sustainable supply chains and foster cooperation between different sectors. Guilds allow people to share their expertise while contributing to the collective effort to meet the needs of the community.

Health & Wellness: Holistic Care

Health care in the community should address the whole person—body, mind, emotions, and spirit. It should be informed by environmental, social, and economic influences, considering both the causes and symptoms of illness. Holistic care practices, including plant medicine and ceremonial healing, should be accessible to all, and practitioners must be supported in maintaining sustainable livelihoods.

Childcare, Assisted Living, and Social Support

A thriving community cares for all of its members, including the young, the elderly, and those with physical or developmental challenges. We must ensure that children, elderly individuals, and people with disabilities have the support they need to live fulfilling and equitable lives. Additionally, we must examine the obligations—both monetary and labor-related—that come with caring for the ill, elderly, and incarcerated individuals. Can these groups contribute meaningfully to the community, either through labor or other forms of support?

Reclaiming Control and Ownership

Finally, we must assess what we have control over and what we feel we should have control over. This includes reclaiming control over resources and systems that impact our lives, ensuring that decision-making is localized, community-led, and aligned with the regenerative values we aspire to uphold.

Research and Data Inventory

To make informed decisions about how to manage our bioregion, we must conduct research and take inventory of our resources. This includes collaborating with universities, research institutions, and government organizations to collect data about the community, watershed, and bioregion. We must adapt existing data from political and financial jurisdictions to reflect the ecological boundaries of our bioregion—shifting from municipal and county-level data to a focus on watershed and ecosystem health. These suggestions provide a comprehensive vision for the future of a community and bioregion that is regenerative, resilient, and inclusive. It emphasizes the importance of valuing and utilizing both human and natural assets, creating systems of exchange that

promote sustainability, and ensuring the well-being of all members, from children to elders, and from ecosystems to economies.

Using the inventory of needs and gifts, Kinship Circles co-create local solutions: gardens, councils, barter systems, shelters, ceremonies. These are rooted in place, season, and tradition. Each project is a microcosm of a just and loving world. In the Kinship Way, the power to create regenerative systems lies within the community itself. Rather than relying on centralized authorities making distant decisions, Kinship Circles collaborate to design and implement local solutions rooted in the gifts and needs of their members. These regenerative systems aim to restore and renew the natural world and the human experience, moving beyond extraction to create thriving, sustainable ecosystems.

Regenerative Systems are processes of restoration, renewal, and improvement aimed at creating a more benevolent and balanced state for humans, animals, and the environment. These systems—such as food security, local economies, energy production, shelter, ceremonies, storytelling, and the arts—are deeply connected to place, season, and tradition. Each project undertaken by a Kinship Circle embodies the vision of a just and loving world, where all beings live in harmony with one another.

Food Security and Sovereignty

Food security and sovereignty are foundational aspects of the Kinship Way. Community gardens will be established as a primary means of achieving food sovereignty, where members collaboratively plan, plant, maintain, and harvest food regeneratively. These gardens will be centered on local and seasonal food, fostering sustainable practices that respect the environment.

In these gardens, regenerative practices will be prioritized, with no chemical inputs used. Instead, soil health will be built through natural fertilizers such as manure, biochar, and seaweed, along with composting, mulching, and no-till methods. Companion planting techniques, like the Three Sisters—corn, beans, and squash—will be employed to support and nourish the plants, providing essential nutrition for all members.

Native plants will be prioritized, including flower strips to attract pollinators and beneficial insects, which help maintain a natural balance in the garden and deter invasive species. Seed saving and trading will also be essential to reduce dependence on corporations that sell patented seeds. The skills required for food preservation, such as canning, freezing, dehydrating, and root cellar storage, will be taught and shared.

In addition to soil-based gardening, lateral gardens—both hydroponic and soil-based—will be established in greenhouses or indoors to allow for year-round food production. These systems will ensure the community's resilience, enabling them to continue growing food even in adverse weather conditions or if supply chains are

disrupted. Kinship Circles will prioritize local and seasonal produce, minimizing the carbon footprint of food transportation. Forest gardens, developed within existing forests, will incorporate native plants, fruit and nut trees, and berry shrubs. Multi-species tree planting will be encouraged, supporting long-term ecological thinking, with the understanding that future generations will benefit from the shade and resources these trees provide.

The Kinship Way welcomes a diversity of dietary preferences, including vegetarians, vegans, pescatarians, and meat-eaters. Livestock and poultry will be raised humanely, with rotational grazing for ruminants like cattle and buffalo. This practice not only improves the quality of the animals but also enhances the soil through natural fertilization, promoting net-zero emissions in meat production.

Food-growing mentors will guide others in cultivating these skills. In times of food insecurity, all members will be expected to participate in food production and preservation, as this is seen as part of their obligation to the Kinship Circle.

Economies

The Kinship Way rejects contemporary capitalist structures and currencies. Instead, it embraces Kinship Currencies—local currencies based on the true value of goods and services within the community. These currencies will enable fair trade and barter systems, where agreements on value are made directly between individuals.

To combat consumerism and overconsumption, the Kinship Way will adopt the 5Rs: reduce, reuse, repurpose, repair, and recycle. Co-operatives and credit unions will replace for-profit corporations and banks, with investments made locally and ethically. Final decisions will rest with community members, supported by advisory councils, and the extraction of natural resources will be minimized to preserve ecological balance. Entrepreneurship is encouraged, but any proposed business or industry must be approved by consensus within the Kinship Circle, ensuring that it aligns with the values of sustainability, community well-being, and environmental care.

Energy

The Kinship Way will prioritize renewable energy sources, with solar and wind energy being the top choices. As technology advances, hydrogen and electric battery technologies will also be utilized. Fossil fuels will only be used as a last resort, when no other options are viable.

Shelter

Housing in the Kinship Way will also aim for carbon neutrality. New building projects will favor sustainable construction methods, such as straw bale construction and plaster interiors, as alternatives to conventional materials like drywall. Existing homes will be

retrofitted to minimize energy loss, with efforts to replace fossil fuel-based heating and cooling systems with ground or air-source heat pumps, solar panels, and small-scale wind turbines.

Communal gathering spaces, outdoor kitchens, and bake ovens will be integrated into both new and redesigned communities, fostering a sense of togetherness and shared purpose. As elders age, they will be provided with communal supportive housing that caters to their individual needs, ensuring that they are cared for in a loving and holistic manner.

Ceremonies

Ceremonies will be a central practice in the Kinship Way, honoring the sacred rituals that bind communities to their heritage. Traditional ceremonies will be led by those who carry the cultural knowledge of their people, avoiding cultural appropriation. Kinship Circles may also create their own original ceremonies to celebrate life's natural cycles and the changing seasons, ensuring that each ceremony is meaningful and respectful of the traditions it draws upon. Any of the Advisory Circle groupings are free to develop their own methods and rituals of conducting ceremony within meetings, embracing cultural diversity and providing opportunities to learn of the richness of cultural and language expression through song and dance and prayer.

Storytelling

In the Kinship Way, storytelling is a sacred form of education. Stories are seen as vessels of law, inspiration, and learning, carrying the wisdom of the past and the seeds of future growth. Elders who hold stories are revered, and their teachings are passed down through generations.

Symbols like the turtle, tree, eagle, and spiral carry deep meaning and are used to convey important lessons about life, growth, and interconnectedness. Stories are more than entertainment; they are integral to the fabric of the community.

The Arts

The arts are viewed as essential to human well-being in the Kinship Way. All people are seen as artists, whether their creative potential has been realized or not. The Kinship Way embraces the full spectrum of artistic expression, from music and theater to visual arts and interdisciplinary practices. There is no hierarchy in the arts—everyone participates in the creation and enjoyment of art, and the community is encouraged to support each other's creative endeavors.

Mentorship will be a key part of the artistic process, with experienced artists guiding emerging talents. However, the learning process is reciprocal; mentees may eventually surpass their mentors, and this will be celebrated as a sign of growth and evolution.

Community-engaged arts practices will be used to foster individual and collective development, not just for the creation of art but for building a stronger, more connected community. Whether for social change, education, or entertainment, the arts will be an essential part of the Kinship Way's philosophy.

Chapter 12: What's so special about 12?

The concept of 12 Kinship Groups arises from the guidance of Becky Big Canoe, who received the inspiration that there would be twelve groups as part of The Kinship Way. This number was drawn from the merging of the three realms of Earth and the four colors of the Medicine Wheel, creating a balanced and unified system for distributing the care of both community and land.

In the Kinship Way, the essential goal is to create a social fabric that supports self-determination, effective agency for individuals, and a strong sense of belonging. This social structure extends beyond just the people living in the present community—it considers future generations, animals, plants, air, land, and water. The focus is on empowering communities to be self-governing and ensuring that the decision-making processes are inclusive of everyone affected by those decisions.

Why 12 Kinship Groups?

The question that arises is: why was 12 the number chosen for Kinship Groups? While the Kinship Way is not about imposing a rigid structure, it invites diverse people to come together and reclaim their agency. So, how does distributing the work of caring for community and land among 12 groups allow for better governance than using 6, 8, 10, or even 20 groups? To understand this, I, Adrienne Rajna, was tasked with exploring the number 12 and what makes it such a powerful and effective number for self-governing, collaborative communities. Through my research, I sought to discover ways that the care for community and place could be distributed so that "many hands make light work" and to avoid siloing, ownership conflicts, or competition for resources—issues common in existing systems. In exploring these possibilities, I began to see patterns emerge through different cultures, religions, sciences, and natural systems. By looking at the number 12 and its widespread use across various systems, I began to understand why 12 could be a strong foundation for a collaborative, regenerative society.

Where Is 12 in Common Use and Culture?

The number 12 appears widely in both human culture and the natural world, often arranged around a central point, symbolizing unity, balance, and completeness.

12 in Measurements:

12 months in a calendar year

12 hours in a day and night cycle

12 dozen eggs or units

12 inches in a foot

12 in Chemistry:

Carbon 12, the most abundant form of carbon, plays a vital role in life on Earth by being the building block of organic molecules.

12 in Natural Shapes and Rhythms:

12 moons in a solar year

12 signs of the zodiac

12 in Religion and Mythology:

Christianity: 12 Disciples, 12 Tribes of Israel

Greek Mythology: 12 Olympian Gods

Norse Mythology: 12 Sons of Oden

Hinduism: 12 Adityas representing the monthly suns

Buddhism: 12 stations of life and the 12 links in the chain of dependent origination

12 in the Human Body:

12 body systems, such as the circulatory and digestive systems

12 ribs on each side of the ribcage

12 cranial nerves

Numerology:

12 is seen as a symbol of completion, divine order, and spiritual growth, combining the energies of 1 (new beginnings), 2 (balance and cooperation), and 3 (creativity and expression).

Literature:

12 steps in the hero's journey

Despite the prevalence of the number 12, it still did not fully explain why organizing ourselves into 12 Kinship Groups would enable unprecedented collaboration. So, I continued to explore this question.

What Difference Does the Structure of 12 Make?

The relationship between structure and function is vital. As Donelle H. Meadows explains in *Thinking in Systems*, the structure of a system—whether it is a slinky or a box—determines its behavior. The structure is not just a container but a guide for what potentialities are possible within the system. This understanding invites the question: What behaviors or potentialities are latent within the social organizational structure of 12 Kinship Groups?

The Science, Math, and Geometry of 12

12 can be organized evenly into smaller groups of 2, 3, 4, and 6. This structure allows for flexible governance, where subcommittees of pairs, triads, quartets, or sextets can meet while still maintaining the cohesion of the whole.

12 Degrees of Freedom:

In physics, 12 degrees of freedom allow for the balanced movement of systems—something similar to how governance can maintain a dynamic equilibrium. By understanding the six pairs of polarities that create stability in any system, such as a boat or an airplane, we can start to see how these polarities mirror social processes like stability and adaptability, security and peace, and individualism and collectivism.

These polarities represent the tensions that maintain stability. For example, we need both expansion and contraction in a system. If one dominates, the system will become unstable. The balance between gathering and distributing resources, researching and applying knowledge, protecting boundaries and reconciling differences—these are the polarities that keep a system healthy and stable.

Dynamic Equilibrium and the Role of 12

Balance and equilibrium are not static; they are states of constant adjustment. Just as bicycles, boats, and airplanes require dynamic equilibrium to function effectively, so too does society. A balance between collapse and regeneration is necessary for survival, and the work of the Kinship Groups is to maintain that equilibrium by integrating the work of all 12 groups in a regenerative way.

The Symbolism of 12 in Sacred Geometry

The number 12 is also deeply embedded in sacred geometry. For instance, 12 spheres can be packed around a central sphere, forming a perfect structure where all spheres are in contact with the center. This arrangement represents completeness—when the system is "full," there is no gap, and the stability is preserved.

This concept also aligns with the Cuboctahedron or Vector Equilibrium, a sacred geometric shape that exemplifies balance and symmetry. All 12 points (or vertices) are

equidistant from each other and the center. This perfect balance can serve as a model for how the 12 Kinship Groups relate to each other, each representing a point of governance, with equal input and importance in the decision-making process.

Tensegrity: The Strength of 12

Tensegrity, a concept that describes the balance between tension and integrity, can also be applied to the 12 Kinship Groups. Just as a structure made of interlocking components creates a strong, flexible system, the Kinship Groups must balance their work, responsibilities, and interactions in ways that allow for strength without rigidity. The structure of 12 enables both stability and adaptability—vital for a society that must respond to ever-changing conditions.

The Nesting of 12 Kinship Groups

The Kinship Way also operates in nested systems—communities within watersheds, within bioregions, and so on. Each Kinship Group can connect to others, creating a network of interconnected, yet independent groups. This nesting allows for a cohesive and supportive structure that spans different levels of governance while maintaining the autonomy of each group.

Fractals of 12

In fractals, smaller versions of a structure are repeated at different scales. This mirrors the way that Kinship Groups operate within their larger community networks. Just as the 12 groups are nested within larger bioregional and global structures, the fractal nature of 12 ensures that the work of caring for community and land can be distributed in an organized, regenerative way.

Conclusion: The Power of 12 Kinship Groups

Through our exploration of the number 12, we see how its patterns in nature, geometry, and culture offer a foundation for organizing Kinship Groups in a way that fosters collaboration, balance, and adaptability. By utilizing the dynamic equilibrium inherent in these systems, the 12 Kinship Groups can create a self-governing, regenerative society that works together for the well-being of all.

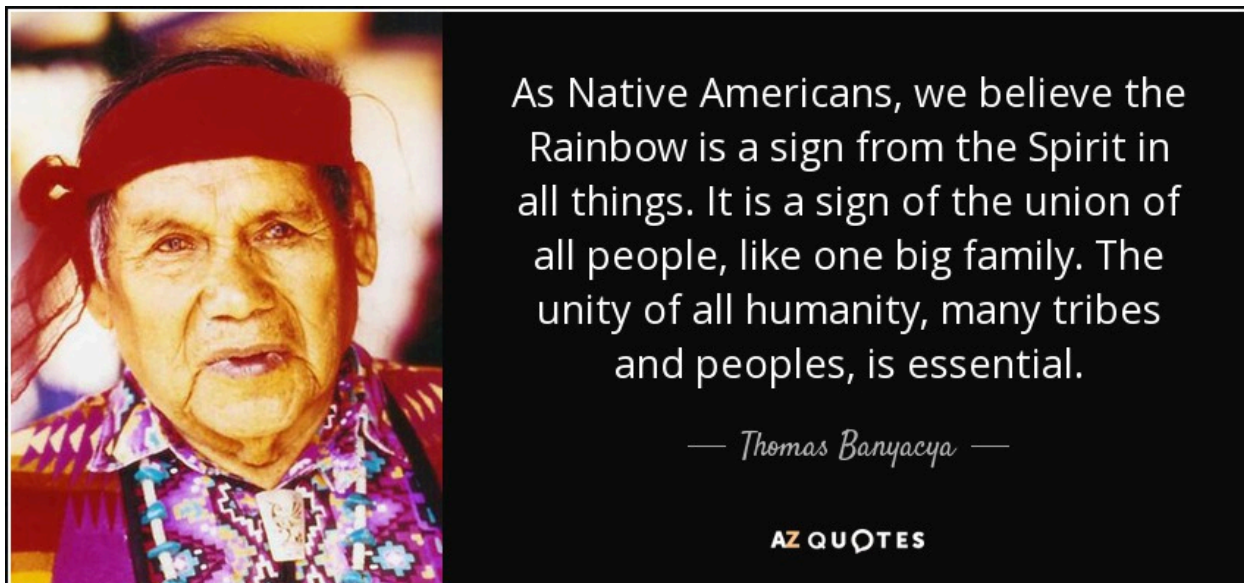
The patterns of 12 enable the Kinship Groups to integrate, balance, and collaborate in ways that respond to the needs of the community and the land. In this way, the Kinship Way embodies the principles of harmony, interconnectedness, and shared responsibility that can guide humanity toward a sustainable and flourishing future.



Epilogue: Kindred Spirits and Global Allies

Though born of Indigenous wisdom, The Kinship Way is a global invitation. It honors kinship with all people, plants, movements, and traditions that center life, justice, and care. There are many movements with positive goals and intentions being born around the world at this very moment and all of them deserve to be seen and heard. The Kinship Way's organizational structure will facilitate the sharing of great ideas and will be able to support their implementation in an orderly and coherent way. We will have calendars and bulletin boards available on the website for people to share notices and announcements and to do deeper engagement with the many good ideas being produced. There is a wealth of material available and engagement with the Kinship Way website will serve to bring the people of communities around the world together to work on implementing the best programs and projects available, at a local, watershed, bioregion, continent and global level.

This work is not fixed. It is a seed. Each Community of Care will adapt, add, translate, and embody it in their own way. The Kinship Way is a living document—shaped by time, by many hands, by breath. It belongs to all and to none.



Appendices:

Appendix A: Working with Conflict – A Restorative Pathway

Conflict is not a threat—it is an invitation. In Kinship, it is handled with care, process, and dignity. Restorative steps include: pausing harm, truth-telling, listening, repair, and ritual return to the circle.

Appendix B: Honoring Identity and Intersectionality

The Kinship Way uplifts all identities—gender, age, neurotype, ability, culture. Intersectionality means understanding overlapping experiences and designing for inclusion. Councils are shaped to reflect diverse realities.

Appendix C: Adapting Kinship to Modern Challenges

Climate change, migration, and digital life require adaptive tools. The Kinship Way is rooted in ancient wisdom but welcomes innovation. Circles may use apps, solar tech, digital councils, and local experiments rooted in the unique relationships they have fostered. Some of the processes we may have to engage in will involve the unlearning of many of the systems we've become accustomed to and it will take awareness and diligent work to integrate the newer ways of thinking and being into our lives so that we can gradually upgrade all areas of our lives, instead of wasting energy trying to keep old systems operational. Like Buckminster Fuller said, **“You never change things by**

fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”

Appendix D : Intergenerational Practices – Youth + Elder Exchange

Youth brings energy and vision; Elders bring memory, wisdom and experience. Together, they can be very powerful and productive allies. Practices include storytelling gatherings, mentorship arrangements, and co-led councils where each teaches and listens. They can work with each other on projects, processes, and practices that foster healthy development for young men and women everywhere in the world. For many of the Elders of the world, making use of their lifetime accumulation of knowledge, wisdom and experience to assist the youth of their community, brings them contentment and a sense of continued purpose and belonging like nothing else can.

Appendix E: Revitalizing Language and Oral Traditions

Languages carry worldview, wisdom, and song. Revitalizing Indigenous and ancestral languages strengthens identity and connection. Circles may host immersion sessions, story lodges, and translation ceremonies.

Each community carries responsibility for the lands and waters they inhabit. Sacred sites are not relics—they are living beings. Guardianship includes ceremony, protection, education, and the stories that preserve all the reasons an area or site is considered sacred.

Appendix F: The 24 Societal Domains – A Full Kinship Inventory

To care for the whole of life, The Kinship Way recognizes 24 interrelated domains stewarded collectively and by individual Kin Groups:

Systems & Infrastructure:

1. Food Systems
2. Water Systems
3. Shelter & Habitat
4. Transportation & Mobility
5. Energy Systems
6. Waste & Recycling

Relational & Social Life:

7. Health & Healing
8. Relational Wellness
9. Childhood & Elderhood
10. Life & Death Ceremonies

Knowledge & Expression:

- 11. Education & Learning
- 12. Communication & Media
- 13. Art & Culture
- 14. Language & Oral Tradition
- 15. Science & Technology

Governance & Structure:

- 16. Governance & Decision-Making
- 17. Justice & Restorative Practices
- 18. Economy & Exchange
- 19. Land, Law & Right Relations
- 20. Security & Community Safety

Eco-Spiritual Connection:

- 21. Spiritual Life & Ceremony
- 22. Earth Stewardship
- 23. Animal & Plant Relations
- 24. Global Solidarity & Peacemaking

All of these can be distilled into 12 essential functions of a stable society and assigned to a Kin Group in a Community of Care, a collection of 12 Kin Groups in a local setting. If a settlement has several Communities of Care, each Kin group can collaborate with the same Kin Group in another CoC, so that their efforts align and society is stabilized daily by their combined efforts.

Appendix G: Sociocracy and Effective Meeting Models

Sociocracy is a consent-based, circle-driven model of governance emphasizing clarity and inclusion. It aligns with Kinship through structured decision-making and role rotation. Other models to explore: Holacracy, The Circle Way, Open Space Technology, Deep Democracy. It will be up to each Community of Care, a complete circle of 12 Kinship Groups living locally to determine the model that works best for them.

Appendix H: Economic & Digital Ecosystems for the Kinship Way

A regenerative economy aligned with The Kinship Way includes gifting, barter, local currencies, digital tools, token voting, and job matching. Platforms must support data sovereignty, real-world integration, and multilingual access.

Prototypes include:

- Needs & Offers Exchange
- Token Voting Tools
- Event Calendars
- Circle Finder
- Randomized Group Assignment

Appendix I: Protecting and Restoring the Sacred; Guiding Principles for Living a Good Life - by Chief Phil Lane Jr.

<https://med-fom-learningcircle.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2017/08/Protecting-and-Restoring-the-Sacred.pdf>

Thank you, miigwech, merci, danka, gracias for reading this little guide to helping humanity to unite.

Please check out our Hylo website,

(<https://www.hylo.com/groups/the-kinship-way-by-becky-big-canoe/chat/general>)

(currently under construction)

If you would like to help with the development of The Kinship Way please make donations to

paypal.me/beckybigcanoe

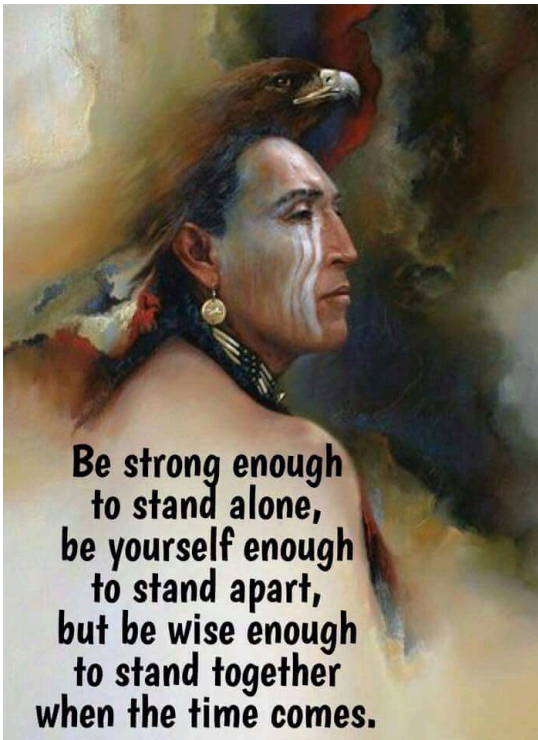
If you can offer technical help, website building, social media, etc. please contact me at bigcanoeb@gmail.com

With my great thanks and appreciation for any support given. Many blessings to all of us.

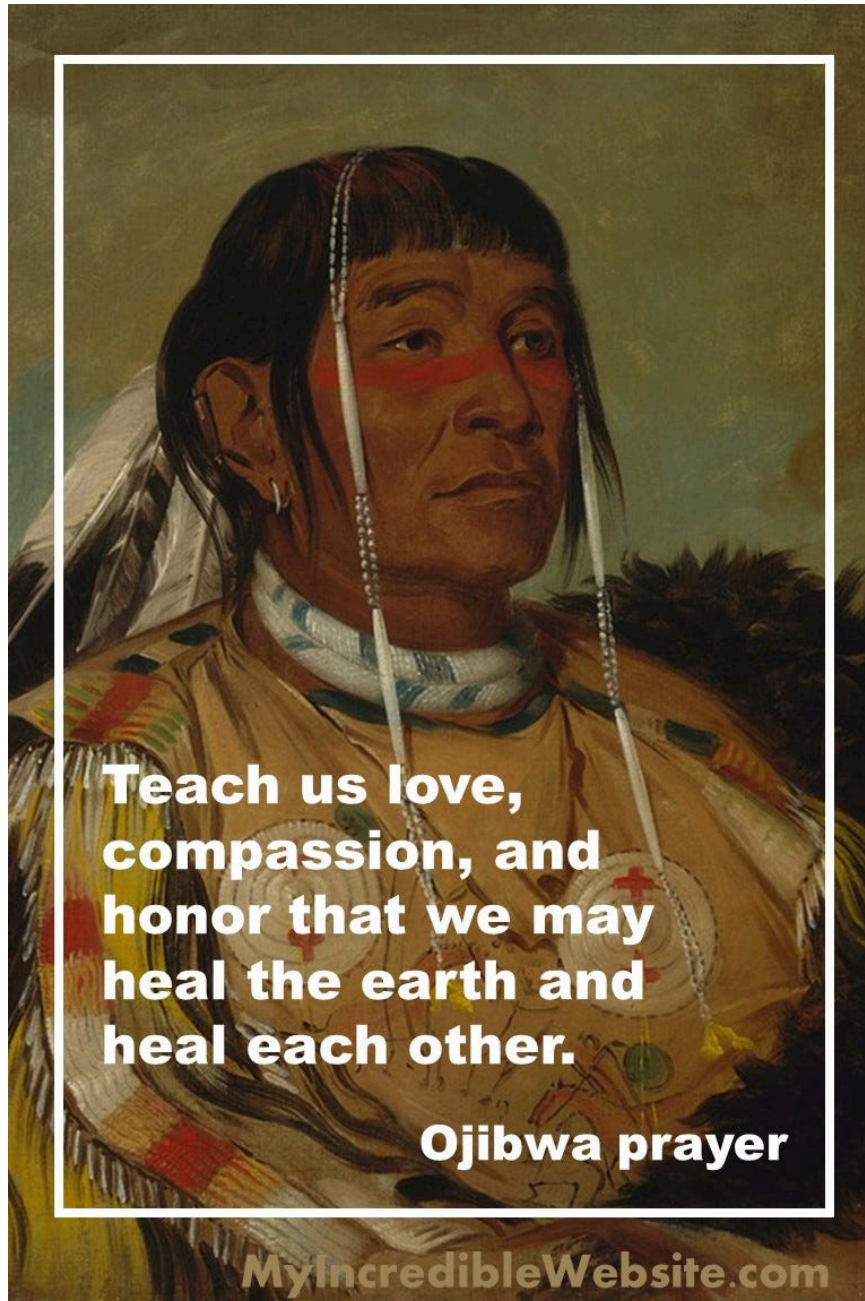
About the Author



Becky Big Canoe is an Anishinaabe kwe from the Great Lakes region of North America. She is a land trust owner, an artist and a natural building enthusiast. As a Grandmother, Becky works in many areas to ensure clean water, healthy food, freedom and justice for all so that her grandchildren can inherit a world that fosters ‘mno biimadziwin” the good life.



**Be strong enough
to stand alone,
be yourself enough
to stand apart,
but be wise enough
to stand together
when the time comes.**



**Teach us love,
compassion, and
honor that we may
heal the earth and
heal each other.**

Ojibwa prayer

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