

TREES AND HUMANKIND

CULTURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BINDINGS

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To effectively educate people about trees and forests, natural resource managers must understand the beliefs and perceptions concerning trees and forests within different communities and cultures. The reverence and adoration of trees has a strong psychological and social foundation in most human cultures. The influence of trees and forests on cultural development can better prepare natural resource managers to understand public and private attitudes and actions toward community trees and forests. Community natural resource management requires a heightened awareness of cultural contexts and psychological needs. Clearly understanding the human--tree relationship is essential for education, motivation, and social acceptance of community natural resource management messages. What has been the tie that binds humans and trees together?

BINDING TIES

Trees have been, and remain, universal symbols, totems, and icons. Trees are creatures of admiration, reverence, fear, romance, mysticism, and worship to the people around them. Trees are more than their component wood, leaves, and bark. Trees occupy the physical world, but in addition, occupy a special psychological place in human consciousness.

Human concepts of trees involve more than infatuation or utilization. Trees carry a deep, subconscious adoration and abiding respect shown to few other living creatures. Trees hold a different place in the human mind than most other living things. To many, trees are a foundation concept in dealing with the rest of the natural world and our own lives.

Trees are a plant-form developed to successfully elevate a leaf array above competing vegetation, survive significant stress and disturbance forces, and live many reproductive years. Unlike animals systems, which outlived their "giant" period with the fall of the large reptiles millions of years ago, trees remain some of the last biological experiments in size. For our time, even now within the decline of this structural plant-form, we are awed by our association with this immense creature.

Before the stone, bronze, iron, and silicon ages -- before the hard, discoverable artifacts of the archeologist -- before Ozymandias stood in the empty desert -- there was the wood age. As opposed to those human serving tools that would follow, trees were both a renewable (in some form) product and a factory all in one -- the producer and the produced. Trees represent both the means and the end to helping in human survival and dominance of the planet. Now we name communities, streets, places, children, and pets after trees. We knock on wood, have valuable tree-centered folk tales, celebrate Arbor Day, and are surrounded with tree and forest symbols. We are made of, and respond as, the cultural and personal history of our pasts. Few humans have traveled far from the woods.



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SPLITTING AND CLUMPING

Trees are definable, single life-forms that possess real or imagined traits. A clump of trees, few in number, remains a consolidation of individual features and concepts stretching from individual trees. A clump of trees are just several trees growing near each other. A stand of trees become a conglomerate of individuals and concepts coupled with group features. A stand becomes more than mere individuals. A stand of trees possess attributes in the human mind that begins to go beyond simple additive physical and environmental characteristics. To production foresters, a stand of trees is the smallest management unit.

Depending upon educational and psychological backgrounds, different people draw the line between a clump and stand of trees at different levels. The absolute number of trees involved for any single person differ depending upon circumstances, experiences and state of mind. For some, this line between a mere handful of individuals in a clump and a stand of trees represent an equivalent similarity a an individual person and a community.

WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE

The final over-arching concept of human-kind dealing with trees is the forest. A forest becomes more than a grouping of stands. The forest, wrapped in myth, wonder, and nuisance, is an intellectual concept. Forest is a term shared by almost all people on Earth, even if they live on high plains and have never seen what we would call a forest. From this forest concept, a lot of psychological, cultural, and social baggage flows back to the single tree in your yard or along a city street.

Forest concepts are not made wholly of trees. Tree concepts are not subdivisions or basic parts of forests in the mind. Mere scale and number of parts does not tell the full tale of human perceptions. Trees and forests remain sundered by the human mind's grasp of the natural world. You truly cannot see the forest for the trees.

EARLY BRAIN WIRING

Examining the fossil record across geological change allows for some early self-examination. If the rift-split theory of human origins is at least partially correct, this was the time of our psychological split from our forest brethren. The savannah/forest split helped forge what we would become. This split modified our tree and forest concepts along the way.

The upright, highly mobile, bipedal stance with stereoscopic color vision was honed on the savannas. Our forebears came down from the trees, sundered from the deep forests by a continental split. On one side of the split, our relatives stayed in the trees and heavy forests where change was buffered. The forest and trees remained home.

On the other side of the rift-valley, change was required to survive. The trees were fewer and farther between. Vision improvements for defense also allowed sight for attack. The creatures of the savannas needed to see and run. Trees became shade oases, temporary shelters, and emergency retreats. Forests become more a place of deep shade and darkness where many things had better eyesight, smell, and hearing. Forests were avoided while forest edges and natural pathways were sought.

TRAVELING MUSIC

The use of established trails by humans is deeply ingrained. Trail concepts and usage concern psychological, safety, and social needs. Beyond the ease of movement through the woods, trails mark past passages, sight lines, and a safety map. Trails exist because of the physical and emotional values involved in getting a journey over quickly and safely. Few people wonder through the forest in a haphazard fashion. All have destinations in mind and move with purpose upon entering the forest.

With species expansion, the trials and tribulations of the road were ingrained in culture and psychology. Trees and forests were met nearly everywhere, all possessing new treats and terrors. The hunter and the hunted changed positions around every wooded corner. The forest became less known and more prone to mysticism and myth. Forest denizens lurked unseen behind tree boles in heavy shade. Some of our reactions and movements remain in-tune to ancient listening and looking postures, and a bursting dash to safety in the trees.

THE DARK HAVEN

Where did evil dwell? Eyes would be cast to the heart of the woods. Foot-trails, wain paths, and horse roads clung to the edges of the forest and over the vast plains of Earth. The forest ways were unknown and untried except where water courses, ridges, and other natural paths enticed humans to follow. Many cultures developed in forested areas, but few lived deep in the woods unless driven there by fellow humans.

The forests became a resource for using and a dump for human and cultural waste. The “crazies” and outlaws lived in the forests. Many negative concepts were bestowed by elders to children in the form of folk stories. Accumulated wisdom said to avoid the forest. Even among modern day hunter-gatherer societies, there are many taboos and avoided places in the forests where they live.

THE HIDING PLACE

Knowledge of forests came through destructive sampling and use. As the great savannas and large forest expanses were worn out or used-up, people moved on. The products of the forest had no visible beginnings among the mists of the woods, and so (the thinking went), these products had no end. Product scarcity enticed and forced humans deeper into the woods.

Finally humans crossed the forest to the lands beyond, where other dwellers were found. Recognizing the finite nature and scarcity of the resources brought thoughts of migration and conflict (Resource control, competition, and reallocation). Ambush, robbery, and attack were cloaked in the shades of the woods. Leaving a trail of crumbs, string, or scarred trees became important lessons. Go into the forest when necessary but always know the fastest way out.

As land and associated natural resource scarcity became more evident, social conflict became more important. The ironic part of conflict and forests remain to this day -- forests may have been avoided, seldom entered, and never lived within, but for the young, old, infirm, and those that could escape, the forest was a refuge. Forests have housed many humans fleeing from other humans, natural disasters, epidemics and unexpected events. Many royal houses and famous lineages hid among the trees at some time in the past.

SUSPICIONS AND SUSPECTS

The same shade that hid, and could still hide the leopard, became a hiding place for humans. The leopard of fear is tamer than real spears of neighbors. The forest was and is a place to hide and cower. With many places to lay hidden and a reluctance among pursuers to enter the visually impaired and unknown realm of the forest, who would seek you in the woods?

Outlaws, the politically incorrect, and the remnants of decimated social units fled to the forest to find sanctuary and safety among their fears. The fears of the forest transferred easily to any who choose to live in the woods. The mantle of the forest cloaked many groups in myth and dread.

The forest remains today a refuge and last bastion to hunter-gathers and naturalistic cultures. The competition for resources and the increased efficiency of more technologically advanced cultures to use and control resources has forced some cultures to extinction. The deep forests remain a hiding place for a few groups hanging onto humanity but losing their cultural survival. The forest we have held in contempt, now holds the last of our past!

TREE GANGS

Tree cults and their mysticism developed to allow humans to interact with all of the natural world using trees as the go-betweens, focus points, and champions. Most of the tree cults that developed gloried in the fertility, strength, and longevity of specific species of trees. Specific trees were always noticed in every valley, plain, or woodland that survived tempest, time and disturbance while out-competing their fellow trees. These trees that dominated local areas were highly revered, such as the oaks in Europe, Shorea in India, and ash in Scandinavia. Tree cults helped organize the reflection onto trees of our best and most important dreams, and the trees reflected back those important attributes we wanted to emulate. The tree became a perfect mirror of ourselves.

The tree cults of Europe carried strong cultural underpinnings. Oak and poplar cults were common and fought against each other for dominance. The Celts had a written alphabet with letters named for different trees. Later groups accepted or used the earlier ritual concepts from tree cults and expanded them. The spring celebrations of many cultures are derived from the releafing of the trees, and the power of the tree cults to bring about this change. Younger religious and secular celebrations used these events to magnify and take over this time of renewal. The carnival kings of Mardi-Gras are derived from tree kings and spring fertility rituals.

Within the awe-inspiring world, where individual humans were but insignificant creatures of little power, trees were worshiped or made a part of worship. Trees were the assigned dwellings of spirits, both of supernatural origins and those of ancestors. Many communities, crossroads, and areas had holy trees and forests considered sacred to the local people. These holy trees and forests can still be found in many cultures across the globe. The early Christian church ordered the destruction of these living idols and centers of naturalistic worship. The warlords of early China did not tear down the human-built temples of their defeated foes, but destroyed the surrounding sacred forests. The symbolism of forest power was not lost on anyone.

BIOLOGICAL BAGGAGE

Humans live in a host of unusual and forbidding places. Some are open, warm and cold plains. Some are places of great tilth and value, while others are lichen and moss-barrens. To all of the places humans have settled we have brought trees -- trees to serve kitchens, lumber mills, and as companions. The windbreak tree, the lovingly bundled and lugged tree, the tree representing tradition, and the tree defining space and framing houses, all are important to the lives of the people around them. Trees represent generations, comfort, wealth, and shelter.

The same trees that were lovingly planted in one generation can be unacceptable, hazardous and neglected by another. The realization of how a tree came to grow in this spot is lost after less than two generations. Humans forget the foresight and effort that allows a tree to grow where they are not typical. Humans develop contempt for trees in locations where forests are common, leading to tree abuse and cultural poverty and devolution.

An orchard is an organized clump or stand of trees made more presentable and appreciated for the product produced. Where two or more trees are planted, a forest concept struggles to be born. The windbreak is a tangle of a linear forest or a row of trees that serves. The yard tree is a pet that performs environmental mitigation, acts as a play structure, and forms a biological sculpture. The street tree and urban forest represent all of these concepts: a controlled and organized servant, sculpture and pet that modifies, and is modified by, the social and ecological environment.

MENTAL COMFORT

People must have trees to touch, to see, to hide behind, and to know they exist. We carry tree seeds into space, plant trees as cultural icons, and revere them as valuable social and personal property.

Many trees are planted and many forests are saved through the help of people that will never see the result. For many people, psychological payment is motivator enough.

People and trees are bound head, toe, root, and crown tightly together in a personal relationship. In addition, romance, developmental remorse, utilitarian needs, and moral responsibilities define our dedication and passion for forests. The community forest is a social relationship and a cultural identity. Trees are the green and wooden framing we expect in our lives providing, even at a distance, a touch with the natural world.

IT ALWAYS COMES BACK TO SEX!

Differing gender concepts surround trees and forests. In a large sense, the organized, familiar, nurturing and controlled environment of the garden is feminine. The wild, adventure-laden, multi-space oriented, and unknown forest is masculine. Orchards and urban forests fall somewhere in between.

Some trees are considered to represent predominately male or female attributes. Many trees biologically function simultaneously as both male and female. Others are dioecious, either male or female. Still other trees are functionally somewhere along a gradient of male and female. Through cultural history some trees remain disposed to feminine qualities and some to male qualities. Trees have been tied with male and female qualities, the sexual act, and procreation. Trees have been accepted as phallic symbols because of their mass, strength and shape. Because of long life-spans and prodigious reproduction, much of which grows around them, large trees have been considered feminine. The same trees surviving storm and other calamities have been considered to have masculine properties.

LIFE'S ESSENCE

Trees have life stages similar to humans. Trees have variable length juvenile periods depending upon reproductive strategies and successional position. Juvenility is ended with sexual reproduction. Asexual reproduction through sprouts from roots and stem bases continue to reinforce the view of rampant reproduction. Tree also decline and eventually biologically and/or structurally fail. Dotarding old age and whimpering death could be used as descriptors for some trees.

One of the strongest symbols stemming from trees is life, death, and rebirth. In temperate climates, (or where rainy seasons initiate cyclic growth patterns), deciduous trees develop new leaves, expand these leaves and then eventually allow them to fall. This process suggests many human development patterns. The cyclic nature of life is embodied in trees -- over one season or over many. Renewal after winter's ravages is a strong tree-associated image.

ARKS OF CIVILIZATION

Cultural anthropology has embraced the major river valleys with distinct flood periods as cradling civilizations. These river valley cradles also represent another natural resource attribute, forests. Simple hut frames and sides, tool handles, fuel wood, boats, and storage containers were hewn from wood. Papyrus, reeds, and clay tablets are easy in this day to accept as shouldering civilization, but trees and forests were the skeleton of culture upon which everything else hung.

The ancient valleys, now radically changed and denuded of their bottomland and side-slope forests, once sheltered and concentrated productive land and forest systems. In search for more resources, people walked out of the main valleys into satellite communities where trees and forests held promise and the land was productive. The pillar of the human house was of wood and the first contemplation of organized community arose under the shade of, and in the midst of, trees.

PILLARS AND FOUNDATIONS

The seemingly unlimited resources forests contain initiated general mining of wood and other

biological products. For much of human history the forest remained a non-renewable source of valuable materials. With growing demands of communities, pseudo-renewable concepts were developed to protect animal game and trees. Management concepts eventually lead to parks, production forests, and hunting preserves. Forest mining remains a major problem in many parts of the world. Truly sustainable concepts of resource use are being developed.

Trees and forests play a unique role in natural resource decision making. The tree is a factory for many products and services. The tree is also a product. Existing as both factory and product is a dichotomy, sometimes difficult to manage. Cutting trees is required to generate capital, employment, and quality of life. Once cut, the ability to regenerate goods and services lie with the natural system of soils, forest reproduction, and the knowledgeable intervention of humans.

Given the values and qualities of trees, there have existed many edicts and regulations on cutting parts or whole trees in different communities and cultures. Once an area was tamed and felt to be secure and controlled, cutting a tree without permission of the community was an anti-social and evil act which carried many penalties. Because humans needed trees and their products for survival, rituals developed for absolving human guilt and providing societal approval of decisions. Ritual could involve explaining the circumstances and needs of the humans for cutting a tree or enticing the tree spirit out of a tree. Different rituals and expectations were presented that gave tree spirits time to move, that recompensed spirits for destroyed homes through offerings, or that gave spirits a physical means, like a ladder, to escape. Even into recent times loggers in different cultures still ask the pardon of the spirits in a tree before felling.

Modern civilizations rest on the trunks of trees as surely as older civilizations. Our knowledge of forest ecology has improved and we can better manage sustainable production of goods and services. Regardless of our technological prowess, which has distinct environmental costs, we will remain dependent upon the managed gifts of the forests, whether in rural or urban areas. Few would, or could, give up what trees provide.

MAKING HUMANS HUMAN

Trees are a part of delineating our lives through time. Events, thresholds, life-changes, and social agreements are marked by established trees or by tree plantings. Legends are bounded and myths humanized by tree connections. Before there were social systems for building elaborate obelisks, plaques and monuments, and even now when “hard” monuments could be built, trees are the markers for lives and times. Trees are a heritage for us on many levels.

Trees are part of human political and social power and its abuse. Many of the symbols for leadership and administration are tree derived. The scepter, staff, wand, mace, and branch bundles of dominance are part of power transference from trees. Even the kingly orb was derived from tree fruits and fertility -- the sphere a counterpoint of shape among the linear features of trees.

Trees have been the instrument of misery and death. The first branch picked up in anger and the wooden hunting points found to effectively damage fellow humans were of trees. Some trees became revered for their wood strength and toughness in weapons. The gallows, impaling staff, beating stick, crucifixion pole, and inquisition tools were all derivations from nature. Martyrdom can be found burned or beaten from the hands holding branches. The initiation for our martial arts lie in the thrown fruit, branch slashing and stick striking of our ancestors and of our children.

EMBODIMENT OF US

Humans have always visualized their own attributes within the forces of nature. These human characteristics given to natural forces and objects usually represented the extremes of good and evil -- male and female -- designed vengeance and benign neglect. As humans projected their strengths and

frailties onto the world around them, the imposing and inspiring form of the tree became an apt vessel. Many names of gods, many representing amazingly human-like attributes, have been delegated to trees and their mystical components.

Food, shelter, and reproductive fertility were key aspects of survival in early humankind. Trees represented the ultimate in a successful life, surviving problems as they arose and reproducing abundantly. Trees were revered for their survival skills. Trees were both a part of human life, as well as a part of surrounding nature that tasked humans. Trees were givers of life, food, shelter, and fire. Trees were intimately involved with, and a part of, the natural phenomenon to which humans were witness. Trees occupied a prominent place, directly and indirectly, in the ceremonial structure of a community. The wind blew, the lightning struck, the rain brought life, time passed and trees generated more life and maintained an immortality across multiple human generations.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Human society huddles around selected trees and forest areas for a sense of tradition and of place. The boughs of trees have sheltered centers of education, enlightenment, parables, patriotism, transitions and change. The famous and infamous have held forth at specific trees or in special forest areas. Coming of age, communal trusts, and agreements of great merit have occurred beneath trees. Trees were at first locations, then identifiable and visible signposts, and finally became boundaries based upon their longevity, size and strength.

Trees are the veil that hides a conspiracy or the meeting place known to all. To climb a well known and open hillside and then move under the shade and cover of a lone tree is a common artistic convention. We are drawn to trees. Trees act as spiritual and physical shields, unbiased witnesses, and defined halls for human gatherings. The open latticework of leaf and branch provide protection from an uncertain environment, yet a close sheltering with little sense of restraint or encumbrance.

The familiarity with special trees, the community grove, or the sheltering forest provided security. Large trees with ancient size, open understory for distance views, and closed canopies for shade provided local humans with a sense of escape from family life, psychological refreshment, and space for contemplation within a known framework of nature. Even the small surprises and unexpected treats of trees and woods generated an easily appreciated, beneficial relationship.

TREE ASPECTS

The litany of tree characteristics that hold us enthralled beyond simple utility are many. In summary, trees are:

- unique and reactive creatures living around us;
- prodigious reproducers;
- cyclic or seasonal in life;
- reborn as they appear to die and then are renewed;
- of long life-span and ancient age;
- of massive size, reach and height;
- generators of a host of products and services;
- tenacious in surviving harsh environments and locations;
- immovable against all environmental fortunes;
- centers of activities for living things;
- aesthetically unique landscape features; and,
- majestic in life with dignity in death.

HUMANITIES AND FAITH

Poetry, prose, music, dance, sculpture and painting from almost every culture, stretching across recorded time, have interwoven trees and forests into the lives of the beholders. From the mythical concepts of paradise and damnation through trees, to the romantic and physical aspects of love, artists and scientists alike have used trees and forests as models, symbols, and analogies. Trees have provided inspiration and anchors to the greatest artisans of human-kind.

Trees and forests have been, and remain, a religion of sorts and degrees. Trees and forests represent: good and bad; mystery and solutions; and, prophecy and history. Trees represent a conduit for carrying a person beyond the constraints of mind and body. Trees are considered to have bigger and fuller lives than people, and as such, are deserving of respect and reverence. The human mind finds devotion (at some level) to trees a natural and logical step in consideration of our place in the universe.

Modern human concepts of trees range along a multiple gradient from master to slave -- dead nuisance to living treasure. Many religions delegate humans as the ultimate creature having dominion or responsibility for other life forms. Here the tree as servant and helper arises. Other religious forms hold trees as deity or as human soul containers. Here concepts of the tree as a spiritual entity and a superior creature are generated.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

Within the religious writing of the world, some of which were developed in countries filled with barren, dry hillsides or open savannas, trees are used as symbols. Trees are word concepts that people can easily understand. There are many types and forms of the trees of life, wisdom, the doomed, the central axis of the world, paradise, and desire. Most references to trees in religious writings are awe-inspiring and positive. Judeo-Christian writings tell of the trees of life and knowledge, where eating the fruits of the tree of knowledge was forbidden. Moslem writings describe a blessed, glowing olive tree upon which hangs a lamp like a brilliant star. The zakkum tree, or tree of doom, a tree in paradise with forbidden fruit, and a terrible tree of the farthest boundary are also mentioned.

In many cultures, writings about paradise are tied to trees and forests in some form. Trees and their products are the center of a life in paradise, or at the very least, the stairway to heaven. The Bible describes paradise as a garden planted with cedars of Lebanon. Early Scandinavian writings lists the abode of the gods as an immense ash whose branches shade the world and reach beyond heaven. Valhalla, the paradise of the warriors, lie below one root while hell lies below another root. The sheltering protection and the fruitfulness of trees are integral to describing paradise.

SPARK OF CREATION

The collected history of many peoples consistently show a connection between their own creation and trees. Whether humans were carved from stems, temporarily borrowed from tree spirits, actually birthed from trees in cracks, fruit, sprouts, or ooze, or the abstraction of man and tree being one entity and interchangeable -- all these creation concepts tie trees and forests to people.

For example, Scandinavian myth had two tree trunk washed ashore becoming man and woman. The man was derived from an ash and the women from an undetermined species. Estonian myth had humans carved from an alder, while Greek myth had humans made from an ash. Siberian myth had man created from a larch and woman from a fir. Terra del Fuego myth had the creation mother as a beech. An Indian myth has the souls of unborn children living in trees until the human mother generates a body of flesh. Mayan myth had humans born of the Ceiba tree. An Indonesian myth stated vertical cuts in a fig tree trunk produced man and horizontal cuts produced woman. New Guinea myth defined man as simply a mobile tree.

BUT FOR WORDS

The binding between trees and people could be love. Love defined is a profound and passionate affection coupled with a personal attachment. Love seems to carry too much personal fulfillment baggage arising from lovers, lovesick, and lovemaking. Love, as a concept, is withheld for human interrelationships of a deeply personal nature while attempting to define the biological needs of life beyond the level of an animal. On the other hand, the terms “like or liking” symbolize but an usually agreeable fondness or preference. The language that shapes our thoughts and limits our intellectual views fail when tree/human relationships are discussed.

Honor and respect have been used to describe trees within a human context. Admiration, esteem, and a courteous regard for tree values and merits are the underlying definitions. These concepts amount to mere tokens for goods and services (now and into the future) generated. More abstract definitions would suggest a veneration of trees for their age and perceived dignity. Values produced and individual attributes considered meritorious in shared environments is a strong components of respect. Physical existence and the measurable space occupied can generate, over time, a recognition of fellow tenants in a shared reality.

Strong within Western civilization and religion is a concept of dominion. Dominion was translated from earlier terms that began with the ruling and controlling by strength or ultimate authority. As time spread, more concepts of stewardship, responsibility, or simply occupying a superior position were generated. Trees occupy a niche of concepts beyond mere pet, serf, or shepherded organism.

TAKE TWO TREES

Trees as servant and healers can be found in the real medicinal powers of materials and compounds they produce. Medicinal powers are also manifested through the positive power of the mind when confronted with a healing faith in a tree. Medicinal powers, through various types of treatments and consumption, and magical rites where human sickness was transferred to the tree or tree strength was made part of human life, were common. This blessing of a tree is still found in many cultures as ceremonial tree plantings which start a life, marriage, or social venture. Trees remain a visible symbol of a long, growing, and productive life. Tying knots in beech tree twigs by lovers, and planting apples for boy babies and pears for girl babies remains a custom in parts of Europe.

The value of trees was represented as resting places or abodes of human souls. Trees were the stop-over point for human spirits between bodies or after death. Trees were the gentle containers of those wrongfully or accidentally killed. Trees were the abodes of mother and children whom died in childbirth. Ancestors occupied the trees surrounding a community, providing protection and assistance. Especially large or special trees were occupied by the souls of shamans and community legends. Trees were given responsibility for tending human life, now and after death.

EPIPHANY IN SUMMARY

There can be joy and an epiphany in beholding trees as living creatures. Contemplating a tree not as forester, woodworker, horticulturist, landscape architect, arborist, tree-house builder, or real estate broker but as an associated creature. Color, texture and form can be quantified. Species, variety and race can be identified. Physical and biological limits and quantities can be determined. But there remains more to a tree than what is physically definable or easily perceivable. More is encapsulated within and around a tree than the counting of parts, features, and functions.

The life-force that human minds give trees will remain a cultural constant. We loan attributes and characteristics to trees that may be too large for our own lives and minds to hold. Cultural tree-literacy must remain a pursuit. Peoples' minds construct the opportunities and constraints of community tree and forest values and management. We remain burdened, exposed, and enlightened by our surroundings that

include trees and forests. The dreams we have of futures include landscapes shaded and tilled with the sound of tree leaves and the smell of the woods. We demand an environment formed of myths and child-like simplicity where trees are landmarks, arbitrators, walls, halls, and roofs. We want all the positive and none of the negative virtues of human interactions demonstrated in tree forms

WHAT WE MUST DO

Effective education in natural resources involve cultural literacy and an appreciation for the human condition in all its forms, scales, and depths. Effective and correct community tree and forest educational programs and products require a clear understanding of “how we got here from there.” Working with cultural and psychological aspects of trees and forests, not against them, will facilitate effective and efficient education.

To conclude -- we must learn about ourselves to successfully understand trees and forests. We must understand our changing sense of community. We must learn about trees, forests, and the ecological systems that facilitate life. We must be gentle, because through our tenure on Earth, we have bequeathed this ancient plant-form and fellow traveler a soul and a place at our table.

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