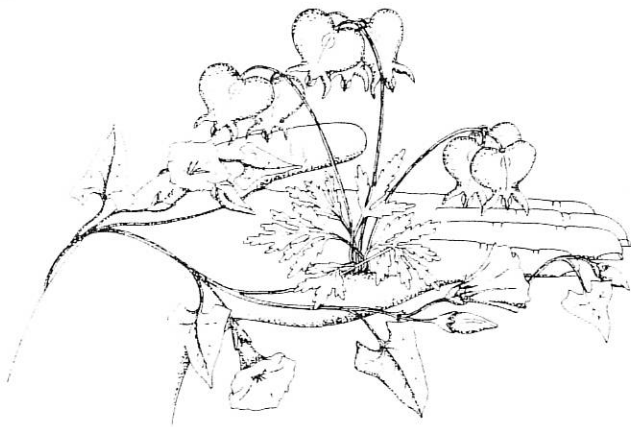


that sustain and support life on Earth. *Living in balance* is a strong, central aspect of traditional Native North American cultures. This tradition can be a model for *Earth stewardship*. Based on the *cycles of nature* and the *circles of life* (Figure 4-1), a positive, nurturing existence connected to the plant world and all of nature is the foundation for a sustainable future on Earth. The Abenaki traditions concerned with the gathering of plants to be used for any purpose show a deep respect for the circle of giving and receiving (see "Plants in the Wild: To Collect or Not to Collect" in Chapter 2). These traditions are an example of a reciprocal, sharing relationship with plants, which can be used as a model for contemporary ways of living in balance in today's world.

The traditional stewardship perspective of Native North American cultures is one of considering the long-term effects of our actions upon Earth and humanity. It is often expressed in terms of doing things wisely and carefully while keeping in mind the repercussions every action will have upon the next *seven generations* of children to come. Decisions are made considering the wisdom of the ancestors of seven generations ago. Each of us *is* a seventh generation.

In our way of life, in our government, with every decision we make, we always keep in mind the seventh generation to come. It's our job to see that the people coming ahead, the generations still unborn, have a world no worse than ours—and hopefully better. When we walk upon Mother Earth we always plant our feet carefully because we know the faces of our future generations are looking up at us from beneath the ground. We never forget them.<sup>4</sup>

—Chief Oren Lyons  
*Onondaga*



## QUESTIONS

1. How does the great Buffalo Bull help the Osage people who come down from the sky in the story "The Buffalo Bull and the Cedar Tree"? What gifts does he give the People?
2. What makes the Buffalo Bull peaceful? What grows from the ground where he rolls? Why is the buffalo an important animal to Native North Americans?

3. Where does Cedar grow? From how many directions are the winds blowing that spread Cedar's fragrance? How many times does the Buffalo Bull roll on the ground? Why do so many things happen in fours in Native North American stories? Why is the number 4 important?
4. What are Cedar's gifts to the People? What does Cedar become a symbol of? Name some other giving plants and describe how they help human beings.
5. Where do Native North American stories say people first came from? Are people really related to plants and animals? Why do you think so, or why not?
6. In what ways are plants and animals better adapted to live in the natural world than are people?
7. What advantages do plants and animals have over people? What advantages do we have over plants and animals?
8. How are plants used for healing and medicine by Native North Americans? Can you think of any healing plants? What medicines do you use that first came from plants?
9. What does "medicine" mean to Native North Americans? How is this different from what it means to people who are not Native North American? What does it mean to you?
10. Why is giving thanks important in Native North American traditions? Do you think giving thanks is important? Why or why not?
11. What does "all my relations" mean to Native North Americans? Who are our Earth relations?
12. How can we heal our relationships with plants and animals? What changes must we make?
13. What do we need to do to take care of "all our relations"? What can you do?
14. Why is it important to do things in the way of a circle to keep our relations well and our families strong on Earth? What is the circle of giving and receiving?
15. What do you think of when someone says "Indian giver"? What is the real story behind this term? How do Native peoples keep the circle of giving and receiving strong?
16. What does it mean to live in balance? Why is this important to becoming wise Earth stewards?
17. What does it mean to live each day and care for each other and Earth with the next seven generations in our hearts?

## ACTIVITIES

### Growing Your Green Heart



**ACTIVITY:** Take a fantasy journey to find the seed in your heart. Grow into a green plant that spreads its branches and roots to reach out and connect with all life in a caring way. Make a "green heart" to represent the strength and qualities of the plant you choose to become.

**GOALS:** Visualize the green branches and roots of a plant that connect you to all parts of Earth. Understand how to

bring to life a seed growing inside of you, by watching, listening and being quiet and receptive. Imagine how a seed, and your green heart, can grow into a nurturing plant that helps you to touch, heal and have a positive relationship with the life in your surroundings.

**AGE:** Younger children and older children

**MATERIALS:** Copy of the fantasy "Growing Your Green Heart," pencils, crayons, felt-tipped pens, writing paper and construction paper, scissors, strips of newspaper, wheat paste, water, paintbrushes, tempera paints, other supplies needed for chosen projects, calming music and equipment on which to play it (optional).

**PROCEDURE:** Prepare the children for the fantasy as described under "Leading the Guided Fantasies" in Chapter 2. They are going to feel and experience the events that happen during the fantasy and can grow into any plant they desire as they discover the seed of their green heart. It could be a plant they know or an entirely new kind of plant. Now read "Growing Your Green Heart" to the children.

*Note:* You may want to play calming music as you read this journey.

#### GROWING YOUR GREEN HEART

You are a small seed sitting on top of a beautiful hill in some rich, deep, brown soil that is warm and moist. The bright sun is warming you inside and out. From this place you can look out over Earth in all directions. Every place you look the land is covered with rolling hills, green forests and fields. Some puffy gray clouds blow over the face of the sun and a gentle rain begins to fall. The sweet scent of fresh rain surrounds you. Soon, the clouds pass and the warm rays of sunlight return. Take some time to look around you in all directions. (*Pause*)

Slowly, you feel something inside of you pushing down into the soil. A root breaks through the coat on your seed and starts to branch down into the soil. You can feel the root absorbing water and minerals to help you grow.

Now a shoot emerges from the top of the seed and grows up toward the sky. You are growing in both directions: down into the rich earth and up into the fresh air that swirls around you. Each sinking root and rising branch keeps forking and following more new pathways. Your roots grow slowly, but they are amazingly strong as they push their way through the soil. Green leaves use the bright sunlight to create food that flows through your sap to feed all parts of you. Leaves and flowers begin to form on your branches. Listen to the wind rustling your leaves. Smell the petals of your flowers.

Imagine what you look like. What color of green are your leaves? Which color do your flower petals form? How big are you? As your flowers grow, what do they turn into: fruits, nuts, vegetables or something new that you have never seen before?

These branches, these roots, are your new way of reaching out and touching the world around you. The air passing into the pores on your leaves is a breath shared with

all other living things. The water being taken up by your roots has been part of other living things before you, and will again become part of other plants and even animals once it evaporates from your green leaves and forms new rain clouds. Listen to the sap flowing through you. The soil feeding your new growth will one day be fed by your remains when you die and decompose.

An animal walks by and picks some food off your branches. How does it feel to give food to that animal?

You are part of all Earth, and it is part of you. You now have a growing, green heart that cares and wants to be cared for. It is up to you to connect in a good way with Earth, both those things that are alive and those, like the soil, that are not alive. Because you and Earth are one, what you do to Earth, you do to yourself. Use the patient wisdom of your green heart to heal and live in a good way.

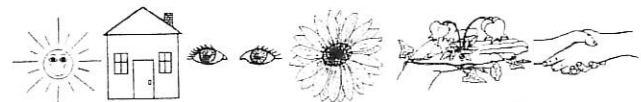
Have each child draw a picture of the plant she or he became and take on a name for that plant. Invite the children to share the illustration with the group. Emphasize that it is their choice to share or not share. Have those who share describe their plant, say its name and tell the others what it smells like, what the wind sounds like blowing through its branches, how deep its roots go and how high its branches reach, how the sap tastes. Ask each child to describe how his or her plant reaches out to other parts of Earth, and what good qualities the plant has because of its caring green heart, such as kindness, generosity and gentleness. Tell the children that, in Abenaki tradition, the first people stepped alive from an ash tree with hearts that were growing and green wherever Gluskabe, the Transformer, shot arrows of life into the tree.

Have the children create a story of how their plant, their green heart, is going to help them to care for and heal Earth around them. Help them to brainstorm and think of ways to help all plants, and especially those they have chosen to be. Ask each child to commit to follow through on some specific projects that will put these ideas into action.

Help each child to create a small papier-mâché heart. Have her or him paint the heart green, and then draw a picture of her or his plant upon it. Their green hearts will give them the strength and qualities of their plant. Encourage the children to use their plant names whenever they want.

Make up your own activities to continue the children's relationships with their plants and the healing qualities those plants represent. Keep referring back to these caring plants as you continue using the stories and activities throughout this book. Encourage the children to use their green hearts to help them care for, heal and take care of Earth and other people.

#### Seventh-Generation Stewardship



**ACTIVITY:** Plant and nurture a flower, tree or other plant over the course of seven visits. List the survival needs of