

Chapter 6

THE HAUDENOSAUNEE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROCESS (HEPP): Reinforcing the Three Principles of Goodmindedness, Peacefulness, and Strength to Protect the Natural World

Brenda E. LaFrance and James E. Costello

INTRODUCTION

The Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force (HETF) was established in 1992 by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (also known as Iroquois or Six Nations) to assist Haudenosaunee Nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora) in exercising their rights and responsibilities with regard to their environmental concerns. HETF is composed of delegates chosen by each of the Haudenosaunee Nations who are committed to identifying environmental problems in their communities. The goal of the organization is to develop culturally relevant processes and guidelines to assist the nations in finding solutions for these problems.

The Haudenosaunee Environmental Protection Process (HEPP) is designed to incorporate the traditional teachings of the Haudenosaunee as a guide in creating a process that protects the natural world. The HEPP also applies Haudenosaunee values to the environment, using Haudenosaunee knowledge to identify the consequences for violating natural law and to develop culturally based enforcement processes. Each nation is free to adapt the results of HEPP to meet specific needs within its own territory. Furthermore, the HEPP supports the

integration of Western research methodologies under the principle of the Two Row Wampum (Figure 6.1), which dates to the 1600s and is the first known recorded agreement between Europeans and the Haudenosaunee (Richter and Merrell 1987). According to the symbolism used in this wampum, the European ship and the Haudenosaunee canoe travel side-by-side on the “river of life” (Ransom and Ettenger 2001).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS THROUGHOUT HAUDENOSAUNEE TERRITORIES

The Haudenosaunee (people of the longhouse) have lived in peace and harmony with the natural world for centuries. We share a deep spiritual relationship with our environment that is rooted in a respect for all life. We recognize that our own physical well-being is based on living in a healthy environment. Our lifestyles, knowledge systems, philosophies, and culture direct us to ensure that our communities within the Haudenosaunee territories are sustainable. Despite an ever-changing world and the continuing clash of values between Haudenosaunee and mainstream cultures, we still rely upon the basic elements of our cultural teachings for our way of life to continue.

Conservation and preservation are once again the principles of modern-day society. Knowledge long believed to be lost has exerted itself, and the new science of ecology has re-enforced that knowledge. The Haudenosaunee believe that Western science and the spirit of the natural world are two very powerful integrative tools for ecosystem survival and preservation. Our people have never been averse to evaluating new technologies, rejecting those that are harmful and incorporating those that are useful.

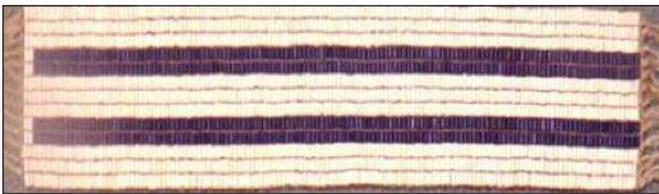


Figure 6.1. Photograph of the Two Row Wampum (Onondaga Nation, 2005).

Contamination of our territories has been identified for each Nation and its communities. This information can be found in *Haudenosaunee Environmental Restoration: An Indigenous Strategy for Human Sustainability* (Annunziata et al. 1995). Centuries of experience have taught the Haudenosaunee how to live in harmony with our environment. This knowledge is based not only on experimentation and observation but also on spirituality and intuition. Haudenosaunee knowledge systems endeavor to integrate the physical, social, and spiritual states into a cohesive force for the betterment of future generations. To this end, the Haudenosaunee have vigorously incorporated traditional knowledge so that we can have an equal voice in the global discussion.

The essence of traditional Haudenosaunee identity comes from our close connection to the natural world and to our homeland. Preserving that association has been important throughout our history. The Haudenosaunee have fought and struggled to preserve our territory for the benefit of the “seventh generation,” so that our grandchildren’s children will be able to enjoy and appreciate the wonder and bounty that the world has to offer.

It is important, therefore, to incorporate our traditional Haudenosaunee knowledge and laws into the HEPP as an expression of our sovereignty and thus for the protection of our society. At the same time, if we ever desire the assistance of our brothers (in the guise of the United States of America and Canada), we can demonstrate that this process meets or exceeds the requirements of federal environmental laws. Likewise, if our brothers need our help, we can share our process. Over time, our elders have consistently predicted that one day our Haudenosaunee children would be talking to the world about environmental protection, and we believe that day has come.

Historically, the Haudenosaunee have used the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship, a recognized alliance of friendship between the Haudenosaunee and the English (Richter and Merrell 1987) to reinforce the principles of peace (binding us together), friendship (chain of friendship), and forever (while the sun shines and waters run). The HETF has undertaken a culturally based environmental project by incorporating the spirit of the Two Row Wampum and the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship. This process is being created from within the canoe, from within who we are as Haudenosaunee. As friends, we are open to share ideas, methodology, and processes that assist each of us to attain our goal: a healthy environment for the “seventh generation.” By bringing out the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship and symbolically polishing it, this project can be done cooperatively within the context and complexities of contemporary society.

In today’s world, we face new environmental problems that our ancestors never had to consider. There were no polluting factories, gasoline stations, or man-

made chemicals like PCBs to harm the environment. To the Haudenosaunee, the challenge before us is finding ways to continue protecting the natural world, preserving our unique relationship with it by using our ancient knowledge and tradition and confronting new environmental problems.

Although many Indian nations/tribes have created environmental codes in the last few decades, the majority of these codes are not based on traditional laws and knowledge. Instead they are a re-wording of federal and state environmental laws, combined with some cultural relevance, that have been adapted to the local level.

Tribes should be commended for creating environmental codes and for assuming environmental regulatory responsibilities. Such codes, however, which are absent of our traditional law and knowledge, promote assimilation by replacing traditional teachings and principles with federal and state laws. By creating culturally based environmental protection processes within their own territories, tribal governments assert their sovereignty.

Federal and state environmental laws are usually based on different perspectives and traditions. Haudenosaunee society is driven by the need to live in peace and harmony with the natural world as directed by our values based on the Ohen:ton Karihwatehkwen (Words that are spoken before all else), also known as the Thanksgiving Address.

INCORPORATION OF HAUDENOSAUNEE TRADITIONAL TEACHINGS

HETF has used the traditional teachings of the Haudenosaunee as a guide in creating its environmental process. Five concepts provide the framework: the Thanksgiving Address; Haudenosaunee Cosmology; Kaienerekowa (Great Law of Peace) with the One Dish, One Spoon Principle; the Code of Handsome Lake; and the Kaswentha (Two Row Wampum) in accordance with the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship. The application of Haudenosaunee values includes consequences for violation of natural law and culturally based enforcement processes.

Our first instruction from the Creator is to recite the Thanksgiving Address, thereby acknowledging each particular natural or supernatural component of the environment with gratitude. Each component complements the natural, observable order and represents the parts of Creation: the things upon the ground with thanksgiving upward to the things in the sky world above (Parker 1913). These components are as follows: The People; The Earth, Our Mother; The Plants, Berries, and the Three Sisters; The Waters; The Fishes; The Trees; The Animals; The Birds; The Wind; The Thunderers, Our Grandfathers; The Sun, Elder Brother; The Moon, Our Grandmother; The Stars; The Four Beings; and Our Creator.

The Thanksgiving Address creates a natural basis for a Haudenosaunee approach to environmental protection (HETF 1999). We use the Thanksgiving Address to interpret the natural world for categorizing and assessing health. Each part of the natural and supernatural world is outlined to illustrate the relationships and responsibilities that promote health.

The recitation of each component invokes its purpose, the manner in which mankind benefits, and the terms of obligation given by the Creator. Following a statement that each component continues to carry out its tasks, those present are asked to be thankful in keeping with the Creator's wishes. The Four Beings, or "sky dwellers," have directed mankind to love one another and extend greetings with thanksgiving. Also, kinship is established with each component of the natural world; for example, the earth is referred to as "Mother Earth," the support for our feet.

The Haudenosaunee have been instructed by the Creator to give thanks for everything that the Creator has provided upon "Mother Earth." The Thanksgiving Address is recited in the morning and at the end of the day; it is used to open and close not only special events but also any gathering of the people. These greetings of thanks and praise are used during the cycle of ceremonies conducted in the spring, summer, fall, and midwinter. These ceremonies are an important way to thank the Creator for making the earth and placing human beings upon it.

Haudenosaunee Cosmology establishes the relationship between human beings and the rest of Creation. When the Creator made the various entities of the earth, he made the humans last. Through our teachings we are told that we are the younger brothers and sisters to all of Creation. The land, water, air, and sky provide us with the sustenance needed for survival. In turn we are to approach Creation in a manner that promotes the survival of "Mother Earth."

The annual cycle of Thanksgiving ceremonies begins with the Midwinter Ceremony that initiates a renewal of the entire natural world (NAITC 1984). Each ritual within the ceremony is a thanksgiving to Creation, the spiritual entities that protect and guide, and the Creator of "Mother Earth" and the "Sky World." Through these acknowledgments, each part of Creation will hear, take pleasure, and reaffirm their willingness to fulfill the Creator's instructions.

In terms of natural resource management, the Haudenosaunee demonstrate the concepts of consensus decision making and collective rights by following an overarching design of the One Dish, One Spoon Principle (MNCC 1996). To gain sustenance, the Haudenosaunee people were advised to eat from one dish using one spoon and to always avoid introducing into the dish a sharp implement (similar to a knife) that may cause harm

(the spilling of blood).

All Creation was placed upon "Mother Earth" for all people. Everyone would have access to it based on the needs of their own survival. Basic needs are provided as long as man approaches Creation according to the principle of Goodmindedness, thus maintaining a collective entitlement to natural resources. In conjunction with the Kaienerekowa (Great Law of Peace), the Haudenosaunee are to apply the One Dish, One Spoon Principle to all of Creation by utilizing the three principles of Goodmindedness, Peacefulness, and Strength, to ensure that all of Creation continues to flourish.

When the Creator sent the people a messenger, the Peacemaker, he instituted the Three Principles of the Kaienerekowa (Great Law of Peace): Goodmindedness, Peacefulness, and Strength (NAITC 1984). Goodmindedness stems from using a pure mind in all interactions with the natural world, including other people. Peacefulness flows from being in a state of Goodmindedness, and Strength comes from having Goodmindedness and Peacefulness. Thus a state of Goodmindedness allows a sense of peacefulness to spread across the land, while creating the strength to continue our ceremonies and offer our thanksgiving to the Creator.

The Creator's messenger was successful in securing the agreement between the Five Nations (later to become the Six Nations) that led to the establishment of a Confederacy of Nations, better known as the Haudenosaunee. The ultimate goal of the Peacemaker was to create an environment of peace where the thanksgiving ceremonies could continue. To eliminate competition, the Peacemaker sought and secured from each Nation an agreement to treat the natural world in a manner that required cooperation and conservation. He referred to this practice as the One Dish, One Spoon Principle. All of the resources of nature would be shared commonly to ensure survival. Today, this principle mandates environmental protection and conservation by all members of the Confederacy.

Throughout the development of HEPP, references will be made to the One Dish, One Spoon Principle and the Three Principles of Goodmindedness, Peacefulness, and Strength. Together they form the basis for the Haudenosaunee approach to the world.

When the Haudenosaunee first came into contact with the European nations, they realized that it was not possible to bring these people (the Dutch, French, English, and later the United States) inside the circle—the circle being the cultural values of the Haudenosaunee. Therefore a treaty of friendship and peace was made with each European nation, the first agreement being with the Dutch (Richter and Merrell 1987). These agreements are embedded in the Kaswentha (Two Row Wampum).

The design of this wampum symbolizes a path called the

“river of life” where both the Haudenosaunee canoe and the European ship travel. The symbolic paths were intentionally parallel in order to indicate the agreed understanding that neither nation was to interfere in the affairs or governance of the other. The three rows of white wampum between the two paths denote respect, friendship, and trust, three principles that keep the two nations close, but at a respectful distance. Lately the separation between the Haudenosaunee and both the United States and Canada, with their governments and laws, has been compromised.

The “river of life” is an apt symbol of the nature of Haudenosaunee treaty relations. While other peoples may view treaties as individual transactions, the Haudenosaunee see them in the context of the relationship they have with the other nation: if the relationship is the river, the treaties are stones that mark spots along its way. The Two Row Wampum agreement was first recorded by the Dutch, and over time the principles of the Two Row Wampum became the basis for all treaties and agreements that were made afterwards with the French, the English, and later the United States. In keeping with the principles of the Two Row Wampum, the methodologies and guidelines adopted by the HEPP will draw on some Western scientific processes.

Kariwiiio (good message), also known as the Code of Handsome Lake, provides additional guidance for the Haudenosaunee people because it defines the consequences to mankind and the natural world that occur when natural laws are violated (Thomas and Boyle 1994). This Code is a spiritual message sent to the people through a Seneca man named Skanienterrii (Handsome Lake). His responsibility was to re-establish the thanksgiving ceremonies that had fallen into disuse, while allowing for adaptations to reflect changes in Haudenosaunee circumstances. To this day the Kariwiiio is recited yearly in Haudenosaunee territory. Failure to perform the thanksgiving ceremonies will lead to the fulfillment of the prophecies recited in Kariwiiio.

The various traditional teachings of the Haudenosaunee, as discussed above, provide a firm basis for use as Haudenosaunee Environmental Criteria (HEC).

HAUDENOSAUNEE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROCESS (HEPP)

On behalf of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the HETF is developing the Haudenosaunee Environmental Protection Process (HEPP) for adoption and implementation by its member Nations, according to their own needs. This process is based on our indigenous worldview and relationship with the natural world. This project will enable the HETF “to create a modern-day, culturally-based environmental protection process that will help the

individual Nations and communities of the Haudenosaunee to protect and restore the natural world, while preserving our unique relationship with it, as sustainable societies. This is the best way to promote our sovereignty and is most consistent with our culture” (Ransom 2001:3).

The HEPP Design Diagram, Figure 6.2, illustrates the method used to construct an environmental protection process that is based on Haudenosaunee culture and traditions. This method is designed to “strengthen the environmentally-based laws of the Haudenosaunee, and build the capacity of the Nations of the Haudenosaunee to plan, develop and implement environmental programs consistent with the culture of the Haudenosaunee” (Ransom 2001:8).

HOW WE ARRIVE AT GOODMINDEDNESS

Failure to use Goodmindedness causes injury to others whether they are humans, earth, animals, plants, birds, or even the Creator. This principle is compromised when the resources of the world are used in a manner that violates the One Dish, One Spoon Principle. Goodmindedness is best illustrated through behavioral examples. Respect for oneself and the natural world, which includes other people, is a fundamental behavior that exemplifies Goodmindedness and leads to honesty, understanding of environmental needs, and active conservation of the earth and all its inhabitants.

The state of Goodmindedness promotes and enables acceptance of responsibility and, ultimately, empowerment. From this flows Peacefulness, which then extends from one person to the world, including Creation.

Strength, moreover, is derived from the faith and trust that is the natural progression of Peacefulness. Through faith and trust the balance and harmony of nature is maintained. All the behavioral traits engendered by the Principles of Goodmindedness, Peacefulness, and Strength form the basis for the designation of Factors, Criteria, Indicators, and Measurement of Indicators in the HEPP model. When Goodmindedness and Peacefulness exist, then integrity and equity are inevitable and can be used to promote the continuation of Creation through environmental protection.

CURRENT HAUDENOSAUNEE RESEARCH

HETF applied the Thanksgiving Address to the HEPP model using the work of F. Henry Lickers, Director of the Department of Environment, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA). He has devised a culturally based Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) from which the

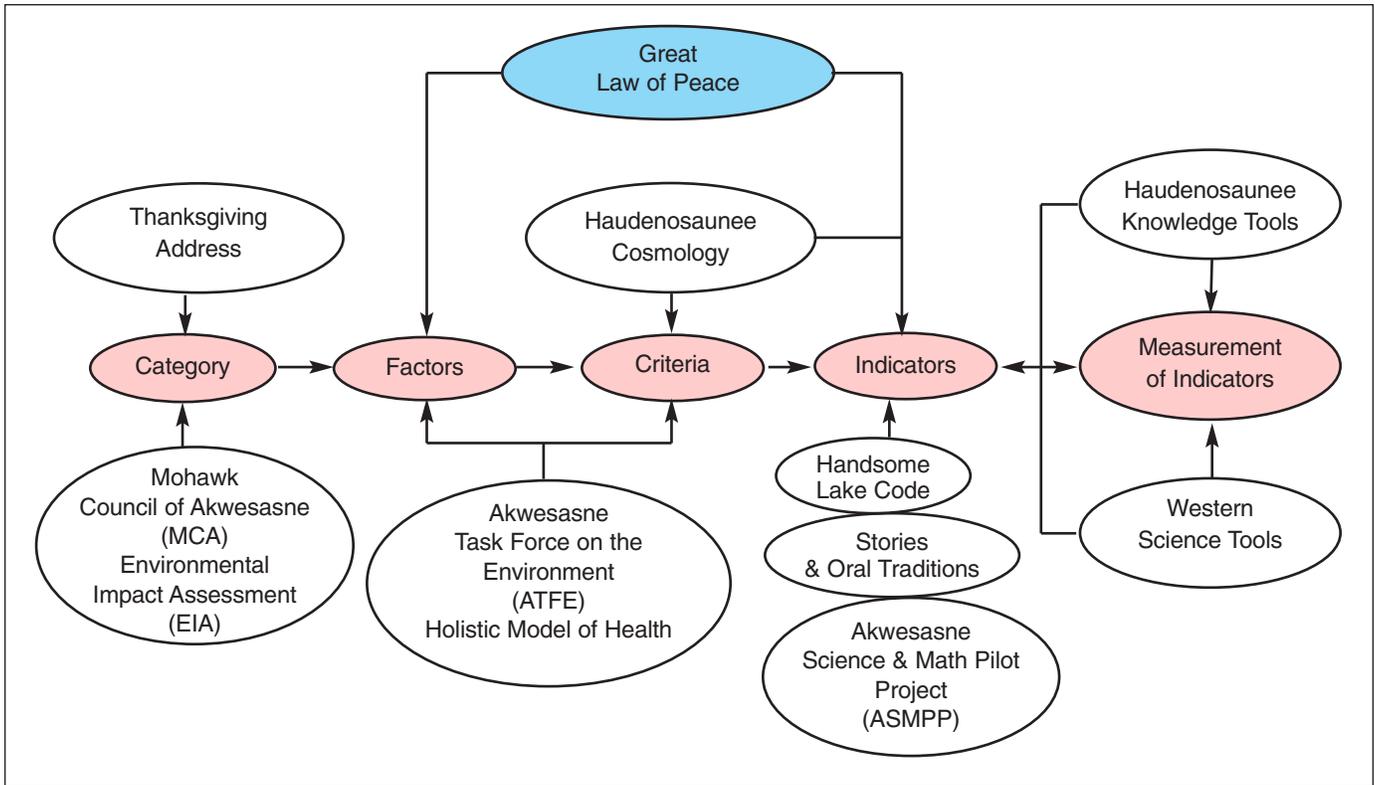


Figure 6.2. HEPP Design Diagram.

HEPP model has drawn. This assessment follows the Thanksgiving Address and has been utilized to devise the components of Category, Factor, and Criteria within the HEPP model. This approach has proven to be extremely effective in identifying and documenting Haudenosaunee Environmental Criteria that may be relevant for further assessment.

The HETF has also proposed to utilize the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment Holistic Model of Health (Arquette et al. 2002) by encompassing the Three Principles established by the Peacemaker in the Great Law of Peace: Goodmindedness, Peacefulness, and Strength. This health model for risk assessment succinctly illustrates the criteria Haudenosaunee consider. In this model, three Factors have been selected to represent the health of Creation, including man: State of Wholeness, State of Good Relationships, and State of Survival. Each Factor is further defined through the Three Principles of Goodmindedness, Peacefulness, and Strength (Arquette et al. 2002).

State of Wholeness

The first Factor, State of Wholeness, examines the ability of each part of Creation to achieve a state of completeness

or wholeness. This analysis includes examining the ability of a Category, or part of Creation, to maintain each of the Three Principles:

State of Wholeness through Goodmindedness

1. Freedom from pain
2. Ability to cope
3. Happiness
4. Humor

State of Wholeness through Peacefulness

1. Relaxation
2. Ability to sleep
3. Belief
4. Identity
5. Hope
6. Ability to solve problems

State of Wholeness through Strength

1. Good nutrition
2. Exercise
3. Work
4. Fruits of labor
5. Order
6. Creativity

State of Good Relationships

The second Factor, State of Good Relationships, examines the ability of each part of Creation to find health and happiness through good intentions. This analysis includes examining the ability of a Category to maintain each of the Three Principles:

State of Good Relationships through Goodmindedness

1. Commitment
2. Respect
3. Responsibility

State of Good Relationships through Peacefulness

1. Ability to resolve issues
2. Love
3. Gratitude, Thankfulness

State of Good Relationships through Strength

1. Generosity
2. Collective thinking

State of Survival

The third Factor, State of Survival, examines practices that promote perpetuity or survival for each part of Creation being assessed. This analysis includes examining the ability of a Category to maintain each of the Three Principles:

State of Survival through Goodmindedness

1. Ability to make good decisions
2. Ability to make things

State of Survival through Peacefulness

1. Ability to heal
2. Ability to play
3. Ability to socialize

State of Survival through Strength

1. Ability to transmit knowledge to younger generations
2. Ability to work
3. Ability to make shelter
4. Ability to secure sustenance

RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH NATION

In keeping with Haudenosaunee protocol, consequences involving violations of the HEPP will be developed and are the exclusive sovereign right of each individual Haudenosaunee Nation. Traditional Haudenosaunee sanctions may be chosen by any one of the Haudenosaunee Nations. Also keeping with protocol, the Confederacy will participate in actual enforcement only

when requested. Remediation and restoration are linked to enforcement and will be handled in a similar manner. Also, each Haudenosaunee Nation will be able to document and assess their national issues. Ultimately, the Haudenosaunee may choose to integrate the information to assess the overall state of the Haudenosaunee environment.

PRINCIPLES INCORPORATED INTO HEPP

1. The Haudenosaunee are to use “one mind” in all that they do in order to promote peace and unity.
2. The One Dish, One Spoon Principle implies mutual responsibility and reciprocal relationships.
3. The HETF respects the diversity of Creation. Artificial conception and genetic alteration and manipulation violate our spiritual understanding of life.
4. All of Creation fulfills the responsibility assigned to them by the Creator. Because man has free will, he is the only violator.
5. Man has an obligation to ensure that we continue to fulfill our responsibility to all Creation:
 - a. Humans must strive to understand the natural world.
 - b. It is man’s influence that impacts the order of the natural world.

ASSUMPTIONS INCORPORATED INTO HEPP

1. Indicators will remain flexible for the users and their environment.
2. The written word is a minuscule portion of the total knowledge.
3. All of Creation is responsible to each other.
4. The health of the natural world is linked to all the people.

PRINCIPLES OF BALANCE & HARMONY

Haudenosaunee scientists and technicians held many discussions in an attempt to devise a process for measurement of the health of the natural world. Figure 6.3 illustrates the model they created to achieve this. The complete Category is the healthy Category, from Figure 6.2, contained in the HEPP and taken from the Thanksgiving Address. All Categories, or components of Creation, are interdependent. To optimize healthy relationships between Categories implies that balance and harmony are attained. In turn, balance and harmony

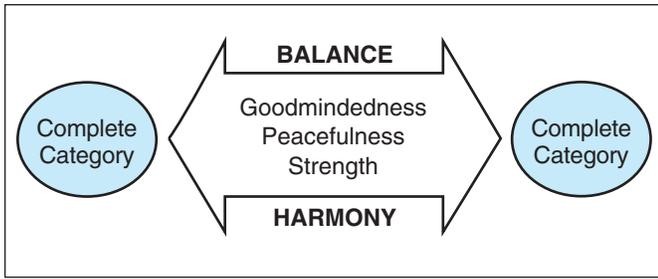


Figure 6.3. Maintenance of Balance and Harmony.

are maintained by Goodmindedness, Peacefulness, and Strength amongst Categories. When this state is achieved, we infer that the Categories are complete in their relationships and thus healthy. Western science would consider this a state of homeostasis and equilibrium.

Figure 6.4 depicts the interrelationships among Categories. It is a partial representation since a two-dimensional design lacks the ability to demonstrate the complexity of all relationships between Categories.

CONCLUSION

The HEPP is being developed based on a Haudenosaunee indigenous worldview and relationship with the natural world. Our individual Nations and communities will have the opportunity to protect and restore the natural world, while helping to preserve our unique relationship

with it as a sustainable society. Traditional teachings of the Haudenosaunee are used as a guide for creating this protection process and support its implementation in a manner consistent with Haudenosaunee values and culture, while maintaining the sovereignty of the Haudenosaunee people.

Finally, the HEPP has included Western research methodologies in accordance with the principles of the Two Row Wampum, when our brother's tools are considered useful to refine our findings in the natural world.

REFERENCES

- Annuziata, Janice Whitney, and the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force (HETF).
1995 *Haudenosaunee Environmental Restoration: An Indigenous Strategy for Human Sustainability*. Cambridge: Indigenous Development International (INDI).
- Arquette, Mary, Maxine Cole, Katsi Cook, Brenda E. La France, Margaret Peters, James W. Ransom, Elvera Sargent, Vivian Smoke, and Arlene Stairs.
2002. "Holistic Risk-Based Environmental Decision Making": A Native Perspective. *Environmental Health Perspectives* 110 (2): 259–64.
- Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force (HETF).
1999 *Words That Come Before All Else*. Akwesasne Mohawk Territory: Native North American Travelling College.
- Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs (MNCC).
1996 *Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs Treaty Workshops*. Akwesasne Mohawk Territory: Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs.

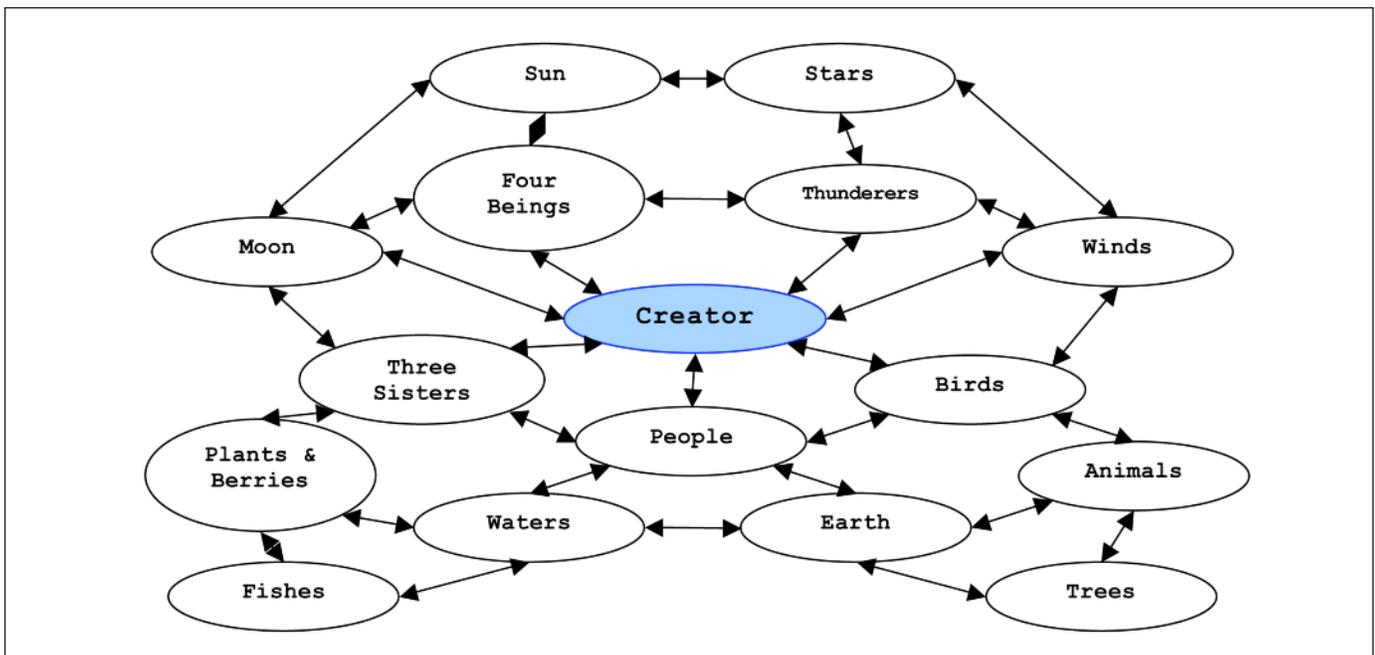


Figure 6.4. Relationships among Categories to Maintain Balance and Harmony.

- North American Indian Travelling College (NAITC).
1984 *Traditional Teachings*. Akwesasne Mohawk Territory: North American Indian Travelling College.
- Onondaga Nation.
2005 Two Row Wampum Belt. Electronic document,
<http://www.onondaganation.org/wampum.tworow.html>,
accessed 6 March 2007.
- Parker, Arthur.
1913 *The Code of Handsome Lake, the Seneca Prophet*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Ransom, James W.
2001 Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force proposal to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Akwesasne Mohawk Territory: Unpublished proposal.
- Ransom, James W., and Kreg Ettenger.
2001 "Polishing the Kaswentha": A Haudenosaunee View of Environmental Cooperation. *Environmental Science and Policy*, 4 (4-5): 219-28.
- Richter, Daniel, and James Merrell, eds.
1987 *Beyond the Covenant Chain*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Thomas, Jacob, and Terry Boyle.
1994 *Teachings from the Longhouse*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing.