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We're all living downstream

One thing is crystal clear. Clear as the brilliant white of freshly fallen snow, clear as the transparent flow of the highland spring, clear as the stars above the mighty dunes of the Sahara...

Our way of living is making a massive mess of the one place where humans have been made welcome.

We eat shit, shit in our nests, dump shit on each other, and end up shitting ourselves about the consequences... because we all live downstream - downstream of the solvents, dyes, adhesives, heavy metals, fertilisers, steroids, fumes, lubricants, bleach, toxin-leaching, lung-shredding dust.

So we open our umbrellas, pull on some wellingtons, swallow our supplements, smear on some cream or other, even pull on a mask, but we know it's not the solution.

Sometimes the regulators act... when the stench becomes intolerable. But more often, all-for-profit dictates that we export the offending problem and re-site it in an unregulated environment.

And so the acid rain, ozone and soil depletion, reduced resistance to infection, the increased incidence of asthma, eczema and allergies - all things we could do without ... spread like a stain.

Often we allow the unforgivable and deny all responsibility.

What, for example, were we thinking marketing powdered milk to African mothers as a superior alternative to breast feeding?

What are we doing flaring such vast quantities of gas in Nigeria when climatologists warn us that global warming is already proceeding at an unprecedented rate?

What are we doing burying materials in landfill when these materials were extracted from the ground at a high environmental cost only a short time ago?

What sort of wealth are we creating here?

In 2003, 48 US states advised residents not to eat fish caught locally. Why? Because of concerns over mercury contamination from coal power plants.

Is that what we mean by wealth?

No.



We'll know we are getting real progress when we start reading surprising headlines like these:

- 1) Sellers will pay for quality reductions in air, water, land or sea caused by the delivery of products to market
- 2) All consumer products to be stamped with an expiry date
- 3) Consumer product prices to include the cost of any repairs or replacement parts required up until expiry
- 4) Buyers to collect a cash refund of 25% of the price paid on returning products to the seller for reuse or reprocessing
- 5) Sellers to be responsible for collecting and dealing with all packaging, carrier bags and unwanted products

In short. We don't need complicated ideas. We need better designs for life, especially when it comes to man-made products.

The Native Indians of America who ate unpoisoned fish, paid no taxes and lived without debt, have left us a legacy of wisdom.

It's this. Treat the earth well because all the unhelpful consequences we create for this world will, in time, arrive back in our laps.

It is inescapable. We're all living downstream.

Ends | 13 Jul 2007 | The Leg

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Native Indian wisdom:

'Only after the last tree has been cut down, Only after the last river has been poisoned, Only after the last fish has been caught, Only then will you find money cannot be eaten.'

'Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children.'

'Contaminate your bed and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.'

'Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.'

Essential Reading:

The Waste Makers by Vance Packard

Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things by William McDonough & Michael Braungart

[The Death of Quality](#)

Sharing could be the answer

Essential Viewing:

Story of Stuff (2007, OFFICIAL Version)



The Story of Stuff

E Waste in India Short documentary



E-Waste in India

Waste=Food



Waste = Food

(Cradle to Cradle) when waste = food, 'waste' isn't a problem

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