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ALL-SPECIES REPRESENTATION AT THE BIORE-
GIONAL CONGRESS

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Resolution From NABC II

We resolve that NABC III recognize four participants to represent the interests and perspective of our non-human cousins:

One for our four-legged and crawling cousins, One for those who swim in the waters, One for the winged beings, the birds of the air, and One very sensitive soul for all the plant people.

Other participants who wish to keep faith with other species are welcome; however, those four individuals formally recognized to act as all-species representatives will not participate in any other capacity during the time that they function as representatives. Their role in the Congress is partly one of deep stillness, of being profoundly awake, of keeping faith with those beings not otherwise present within the circles.

Affirming that it is a very delicate, mysterious process whereby these representatives are recognized, we choose not to completely codify this process, but we hope that the representatives will be recognized not just by human consensus but by non-human consensus.

Members of this committee suggest that at least two of the four representatives functioning at any time be inhabitants of the host bioregion. Peace.

Statement of the Committee (Also Adopted in Plenary):

We know that bioregionalism inevitably, unavoidably, is involved in magic processes. Many individuals in this time are beginning to feel strange sensations, sudden bursts of awareness, communication from other dimensions. Those of us who work not with formal religion but with magic, do not in general interpret these as out-of-the-body experiences, but as the body itself waking up to where it is; not as communications from other worlds outside of or beyond this

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material world, but rather as communications from forgotten dimensions of this world, communications from other embodied forms of sensitivity and awareness too long ignored by human civilization.

The other animals, for instance, have given us a great deal, and they have been patient with us humans, as have the plants, the rivers and the land itself. Many creatures have donated their lives to our quest — many for instance are undergoing excruciating pain in our laboratories before being sacrificed — yet still they remain unaware of our purposes. The fish find it more and more difficult to swim in the stinging waters, while the passage upstream is blocked by freshly built dams; birds spin through the chemical breeze, hunting in circles for that patch of forest which had been their home. They are not alone in their dizziness, for things are quickly worsening throughout the biosphere.

Naturally, then, the mountains, the creatures, the entire non- human world is struggling to make contact with us. The plants we eat are trying to ask us what we are up to. The animals are signalling to us in our dreams or in forests. The whole Earth is rumbling and straining to let us remember that we are not just in it but of it; that this planet, this macrocosm is our own flesh — that the grass is our hair and the trees are our hands and the rivers our own blood — that the Earth is our real body and that it is alive.

And so everywhere, now, our exclusive space of purely human language is beginning to spring leaks as other styles of communication make themselves heard or seen or felt. All over, in so many different ways, we feel intimations of a wholeness that is somehow foreign to us and we see the tracteries of another reality. It is now indeed a time for magic, a magic time. But it is no supernatural thing, this magic. We are simply awakening to our own world for the first time, and hearing the myriad voices of Earth.

- 1. The four individuals formally designated as all-species intermediaries do not, in fact, have a vote in the congress plenary. They are empowered to be present as minders, and reminders, of the perspectives of other species, and — if the needs of other species are being neglected or violated — to growl, squawk, or (if possible) talk on their behalf. Yet the human congressers should be aware that these four intermediaries have no vote, and hence that they, alone, cannot block passage of any proposal that has the consensus approval of the human participants.
- 2. Those who functioned as species-intermediaries at NABC III were exhilarated, moved, and - some of them - transformed by the process. Most, too, were disturbed by the apparent triviality and even absurdity of many points we humans chose to consider or debate, the compromised nature of the visions we chose to share with each other. (Remember, however, that the world as perceived by herons or sequoias is commonly very different from our human experience.) Of course, just because other species perceive things in a certain light does not necessarily mean that they are

”right” or that we must adopt their perspective. What is important is that we actually consider their perspective. We must take their experience into consideration. Failing this, our own perspective risks being seriously impoverished.

- At any rate, the practice of keeping faith with other species during a council of human egos is not easy. The difficulty was greatly exacerbated at NABC III by the fact that the formal congress was held indoors. Non-human animals — save those so domesticated that they have relinquished their own earth-born experience and now live, like most of us, at the behest of abstract and oversized human technologies — do not enjoy being indoors. Electric lights make them wither. Their eyes do not enjoy straight lines and right angles. It pains them to be so thoroughly cut off, by concrete and glass, from their wild sisters and brothers.
- For these reasons, the committee for Mischief, Animism, Geomancy and Interspecies Communications (MAGIC), together with the caucus of Women Interested in Talking to Crows and Herbs (WITCH) has proposed that at future Congresses, all decision-making plenaries or councils be held out of doors, on the ground and under the sky — save when this is made truly inexpedient by inclement weather.
- Some may object that it is difficult to concentrate or focus upon the crucial ”matters at hand” when we are out beyond the four walls, where our attention is easily distracted by the rubbing of trees, by soaring hawks or the shape of cloud. All-species intermediaries, maintain that such events are not distractions — by exposing our senses to the cawing crows and the throb of crickets we ensure that the breathing Earth plays a part in our human decision-making.
- 3. The practice of keeping faith with another species, or with several other species, is a discipline. It is, we might say, a practice that requires practice. Individual persons wishing to act in this capacity should be intimately aware of the biology and ecology of their familiars. And they should know, too, the traditional myths and stories regarding these species that are told by indigenous people — such stories and songs often carry a keen awareness of the emotional character, the traits and the habits of other species, an awareness (honed over generations of contact) far more nuanced and intimate than is commonly attainable by the civilized and literate intellect. Yet neither of these sources, the scientific or the storied, can take the place of direct, personal contact with other species on their own terms. Scientific evidence from ecology and ethology, like the insights embedded in totemic myths, provide us — at best — with ”clues” for entering into a living rapport with other beings. Yet a genuine reciprocity and empathy with other shapes of intelligence is not easily come by, nor quickly achieved — this we all know.

- Finally, the practice of maintaining such a rapport while being attentive to the voices and visions of human decision-makers is difficult indeed. It requires listening with one ear to the human speakers while lending the other to the wind whispering in the trees, to the churning voices of the river, to the beating of one's own heart. In this way we begin to bring the human community into resonance with the larger community of beings. We stand poised on the boundary between human culture and the wilderness, keeping the flow open — ensuring that the boundary functions more like a membrane and less like a barrier. This is a unique ritual — a kind of meditation for our time.
- Once again, it is a practice that requires practice. It can be practiced following a deer-tail in the mountains, or while lying on the ground in one's backyard staring sideways into the deep forest of grass. It can be practiced at town meetings, and at regional congresses. Those of us who acted as species-intermediaries at NABC III suggest that any other folks interested in this work begin preparing themselves as soon as possible.

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