



Unama'ki Institute
of Natural Resources:
A Vision

Given by Elder Albert Marshall



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What is UINR?

The Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources is not a self-explanatory term. We must define what it represents, what it was meant to be and what it can become. For First Nations people, UINR implies who we are and what our responsibilities are in a sense and spirit true to First Nations. UINR's creation implies that we have inherent responsibilities not only for our own actions and behaviour toward each other but also that these responsibilities extend to the greater sphere of Creation. We must ensure that we abide by the laws of nature. We cannot allow ourselves to become just another organization that pays lip service. UINR was never meant to be a rubber stamp for other organizations, or to duplicate the services supposedly provided by other agencies, whether federal, provincial or otherwise. Our purpose instead is to ensure that these agencies will be bound by the responsibilities that are inherent in their mandates, and that we will be bound by ours.

In accordance with our beliefs, we do not call resources by that name, rather we call them gifts. UINR must ensure that these gifts are not used solely for our purposes now, but rather that we will ensure our behaviour will not cause a negative reaction for future generations. We believe in looking thoughtfully at our past and learning from that. So, for example, we must look at the way things have been done by government agencies previously. Government laws, for example, were written when our natural resources were in abundance, so there was no need at that time to reflect or take account of whether those gifts were being used according to the laws of nature.

Time however has affected our vision, and we see that we cannot afford to become complacent. We must rise to our responsibilities, ask ourselves how we each of us as individuals can make a difference. There is a saying, "I am only one voice in the wilderness, how can I make a difference", but there is also a saying "if we set out to change the world we must first change ourselves". In changing ourselves we must abandon and ignore the rhetoric that has been brought upon us as a people, and call it what it is...greed.

Abide by the Laws of Nature

Gifts not Resources



A Strong Advocacy Role

UINR today does not have the luxury to bide our time or continue to appease the funding agencies. To make a difference we must take a strong advocacy role. It will seem unorthodox compared to how things are normally done to sustain ourselves. But we must not lose sight of the true vision. Native people must be strong and diligent in speaking of these responsibilities; we cannot be silent. We must be diligent, strong and yet also forgiving. This is the only way to ensure the rest of our stay on earth is one of balance, peace and harmony. Without this vision, we are no different from any other interest group or agency currently legislated to be “stewards” of these gifts. In order to set a right course, we have to be serious and strong in pointing out when any of these agencies or laws are outdated. We must be patient and diligent when we remind these “stewards” of our gifts, and of the nation whose beliefs have lived in harmony with these gifts for many generations. Complacency or denying ourselves is something we cannot afford to indulge in. Nor can we abdicate responsibility to government.

If UINR is going to make a profound difference or effect on these complex issues, then we can never allow ourselves to bog down or become stifled by the fact of financial support from these agencies. We have heard in the past that these agencies are eager and willing to advocate a very unique and effective way of using our gifts of the creator. We no longer can be sidetracked by this, or bought by dollars for administration purposes. We must ensure that acceptance of these dollars does not mean we are bound to work within their framework or their legislations. We must work from a different level of consciousness, one which respects our concepts of the creation and our place within it.

Creation and our Place Within it.

Our Future Role-UINR

Establishing our unique identity

We now have to reflect deeply, soul search and be innovative not only in implementation of our beliefs but in looking seriously at how flawed and narrow minded bureaucracies have been. We must be diligent and serious in our advocacy role. UINR has been touted all across the country for its initiatives, but we need to reflect on them. Are we satisfied in mirroring or repeating some of the things as they are being done, or are we going to be strong enough to say “thank for your money” but we will not compromise our convictions. There will come a time when we must go against some of the current policies. I have some personal dismay on this point. I have heard through our collaborative processes that the government agencies are more than willing to take a new approach in using these gifts of the Creator, but the first step into this new direction has to be internally identifying our priorities, so they may be ours and not be imposed from outside. How ready and prepared are we if nature has a different agenda than ours?



Becoming a Service Provider

The first step must be to put into force our objectives. The first essential one is to be a service provider—meaning that we are going to be so effective and forceful in representing the other species and entities that cannot represent themselves in human form. Traditionally, we have used phrases like “all my relations”. Let us dig deep down into our hearts and determine what these phrases really mean. To me it is simple, in order for me to be part of this universe than I have to first come to terms with the fact that I am not the superior being. I am small yet vital to the whole scheme of Creation.

How do we become a service provider? To me it means we look to who and what the legislations are, then take them and incorporate how we see ourselves in the scheme of the universe. We must provide this unique service that no other agency can or will provide. We have a unique opportunity because the courts of law give us a special relationship through treaty rights. We must optimize on these rights. When we see something not proper or sustainable, then we ultimately have responsibility to point out the right direction and be ready and willing to implement recourse. We must indicate a new way of doing things.

Becoming a Knowledge Collective

UINR must become a knowledge collective. In order to foster this new way of thinking, we must first look into our past with one eye, see where we come from, learn where we are now. Once we grasp some direction from mistakes we have made, then we are ready to move forward into the future. We must bring forth the knowledge which has been transmitted to us by our ancestors, by the spirits. With those points we had reached a sense of understanding for 11,000 years or so. Our forefathers managed to use the gifts in a balanced way. We have to be very forceful at times to incorporate some of those teachings into our current affairs. At the same time, since we are the knowledge holder of these teachings, we do not mean to imply that they will be given away to be exploited again. UINR has the responsibility to ensure these gifts of knowledge will always remain within the control of UINR on behalf of current elders and on behalf of our ancestors.

With those sharings of knowledge, we can open a few eyes, especially the eyes of our young people. Then they can be very comfortable to say it is perfectly alright to be a Mi'kmaq person in 2005, to integrate the best of the white man's world, and our world, and forge ahead with these two strengths.

All My Relations

A New Way of Doing Things.

Gifts of Knowledge



A Sense of Direction

Our relationship to Mother Earth

With these gifts of understanding, we not only have another level of consciousness but a sense of direction. Over and over again we have allowed ourselves to be silenced. That silence need not be used as an excuse in the future. That is how things were done then, but that is not how things will be done now. With UINR's wonderful human resources and the wonderful directions we have received through the wisdom of our elders, we cannot afford to ignore our responsibility, we must use our knowledge so we may be seen as a unique organization. The organization has to be used not only to sustain personnel, but to be the instrument of the changes needed to be made. If we are hopeful that we will be able to survive with the amount of devastation that Mother Earth is suffering, then we must accept this responsibility. Mother Earth is suffocating with toxins and pollutants that have been allowed to be emitted into the atmosphere. Our Mother the Earth is suffering with the injuries she has suffered for greed and the dollar.

Of the waters and their species...

Our sacred lifeline, the water, is being cut. To really appreciate water one has to ask what is water. We are water, the earth is water. Seventy percent of the earth's surface is covered by water. Seventy percent of our own being is water. How can we continue to ignore the seriousness of water quality depletion when we find ourselves where water is no longer fit for human consumption. Are we going to submit to the illusions that have been fostered by multinationals and governments that they will give us some magic pill? The earth no longer has the capacity to heal her self when part of her is injured, because the devastation is now so rapid.

We have to think seriously about the illusions and rhetoric that we have been given. We must seriously consider how we can sit back and allow someone else, someone that is the cause of the way in which Mother Earth is suffering so greatly today, to be the sole decision makers. How many times must we be comfortable just saying yes, we are doing water sampling. Yes, we are taking water temperature. It is all very well and good to identify those problems, or keep repeating to ourselves that we aware of things being done to Mother Earth, but how willing are we to take the first step and say enough is enough, we are no longer going to be silenced, we are from here on going to be heard, this is how we should be living and sustaining ourselves. We should be serious about our past beliefs and practices, knowing that among our many responsibilities we must ensure that the next seven generations will have the same opportunities of enjoying the beauty of Mother Earth and of using the gifts that she has given to us in a responsible way.

Take the First Step



We have in the past identified areas as serious in the sense that they affected our ability to extract certain species from water solely for the purpose of making dollars. We have been short sighted in thinking only in terms of how much money we were going to lose or had lost because some species were ill. For example oyster. There has been enough effort put forth in raising consciousness of the devastation of the disease MSX, thinking if we focused on that issue we might be blessed and the problem might go away. However there are people within our organization who have practiced diligence and have developed expertise in recognizing it as a problem. We must now designate someone to keep monitoring the progression of this disease, to see what it will eventually do and allow Mother Earth to heal her self. The rest of the resources should be used in preventing Mother Earth from such devastation again, and toward helping her if such an event should come into Pitu'paq.

*Allow Mother Earth to
Heal Her Self*

Of the insects, birds and species of the land....

We must constantly check our objectives. Being proactive should become second nature. We have allowed ourselves one direction for the sake of surviving so we could continue to operate, but now the time is ripe to look in another direction. I don't envision a magic pill for us, one that will allow us to operate and survive in the future. We must steer our own destiny, be our own magic. We should be serious in doing everything humanly possible to make ourselves aware and educated as to what happens when we allow certain chemicals, certain abuses and exploitations to be allowed in our traditional territories. In the future it is important that we address these issues as they come about.

We need to learn from other species that have been here longer than us. Listen and observe some of the key players that were put here for a specific purpose. We must adapt the wisdom and clearness with which an eagle sees his or her natural world, and see what he or she must do in order to sustain themselves. We must look at the other indicators, such as the dragonfly which has been here for thousands of years, and the frog. All these indicators mentioned are like the canaries in the mine. They warn of us of the seriousness of conditions.

We must humble ourselves in order to make a serious difference, accept that what we call corporate science can no longer be trusted by itself, rather we must listen and adhere to what the natural world is communicating to us. If and when there are changes, whether sudden or gradual, we must be willing to change course and direction as these changes occur.

*We Must Listen and Adhere
to What the Natural World is
Communicating to Us*



Of our brothers and sisters, the forests.....

In forestry, we also have to overcome the misguided nature of harvesting “X” number of trees to sustain the business. We must see past the illusion that the current method of harvesting is the way to go. Obviously we all know this is not the right course of action to take, not the right charter for our future. Over and over again there are indicators that these directions misguide us, and we have been blinded by the fact that if we don’t harvest so many trees per minute then we cannot sustain ourselves. While we are employing these methodologies to sustain that operation, we are not seriously thinking that the trees need to always be there, that this is our goal. Our resources must be spent in this direction, finding a way of harvesting these gifts without exploitation. There are many things that we can incorporate into our organization to support this. We must look at these gifts in a more appreciative way, not be blinded into thinking that we are doing the right thing when we clearcut, destroy the ecosystem and create an imbalance in the biodiversity of the forest. Yes, we can continue harvesting, but in a manner that allows the forest to continue to sustain itself.

Harvesting These Gifts Without Exploitation.

Redefine Sustainability.

To move in this direction we need to redefine sustainability. Unfortunately, the spirit of the word has been distorted to mean that we meet the needs of those doing the exploiting. The true spirit of the word has to mean that we meet the needs of the gift. We must remove trees only in such a way that the ecological integrity of the forest is not compromised. We need to spend some time dispelling the notion that sustainability means the bottom line or the almighty dollar. We must incorporate values and assets in our vision other than economic benefit. Sustainability must mean that we include all other factors that keep any economic initiative going; we must incorporate both human capital and natural capital. This way only a certain amount would be safely harvested, the rest would be left in place so that our Mother will be able to nourish the species that are coming up. We could look at other gifts within that domain, such as wreath making and investigating or researching ginseng or replanting of other species that were traditionally used in crafts. By being diverse in our operations, then we would not put as much strain on one species, as we are doing today. We need to also ask ourselves, if and when an area is clearcut, are we interfering with the genetics of those species by replanting the forest with just one species. When you plant only one species, what are the probabilities of that one species reaching maturity when it must struggle with other species to survive.

Human Capital and Natural Capital



Guidance to move forward

Lately it seems that we must inform or ask permission from other agencies to move forward, and this is a deep concern. Perhaps the time is right to redefine current terminology that is stifling our initiatives. Look at the work consultation for example. They have one interpretation. So do we. Our understanding is that it means that we have one perspective, others have their own. We bring forth these differences of opinion, sit down, and no matter how much time it takes share the two perspectives we have until we have truly heard one another. We keep on discussing these issues until there is some consensus reached, then both sides are more than satisfied and all can feel that they have brought some positive contribution to the table. One side cannot be seen as the master, but rather two groups journey on a path of co-learning. Co-learning, co-operation, trust and dedication will be our benchmarks. Agencies talk about monitoring our indicators of success. Instead, we believe that the word should be nurturing, which is conceptually consistent with the natural world.

UINR has a unique mandate, one which places it apart from other agencies or government departments. UINR is the modern conduit for the teachings of our Mi'kmaq nation, teachings given to us by our ancestors and by the spirits, practiced consistent with the laws of nature and designed to achieve balance with our Mother the Earth. UINR recognizes that we share with all species a dependency upon Mother Earth and upon each other; and that no one species is master over another. Rather the presence of each species is a gift, to be honoured, respected and preserved. We recognize that Mother Earth is seriously ill as a result of our human species living out of balance with her; and we also recognize our responsibility to move toward a restoration of that balance. We can no longer remain silent in the face of, or remain compliant with, other cultural values. We must heed the voices of our Elders as they urge us to bring our teachings forward and journey together with our neighbours to protect Mother Earth. We must be confident in breaking our long silence, and bring forward the gifts of our teachings in order to protect the gifts of species. Only UINR can represent this voice, and the voice of those species who cannot speak for themselves, as we move ahead on this difficult but necessary journey. We must become service providers, knowledge holders and practitioners of our beliefs. We must respect the laws which Mother Earth has taught us. We must realize that true capital does not lie in dollars, and that our children need to inherit a world rich in diversity and production. Only then will Mother Earth respond to us with health and a robust future. Only then, when we keep our trust with her, will she be able to maintain her trust with us. The degree to which other agencies work together with us to prepare this path will determine our ability to enter into agreements with them. Otherwise, our teachings as passed to us for many generations, and the planet upon which we all depend, will be sacrificed. As these teachings are lost, so will be Mother Earth. Our resolve now will decide the strength of our future.

*Redefine Current Terminology
That is Stifling Our Initiatives*

*Two Groups Journey
on a Path of Co-learning*

*UINR is the Modern Conduit
for the Teachings of
Our Mi'kmaq Nation*

