

## Joy Means Being Touched by the Elements of the Earth!

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*Sharing Our Pathways*, Vol. 8, Issue 1

How many of you have been out in nature fishing, picking berries, snow-shoeing, hiking, cross country skiing or just relaxing? What do you feel when you are out on the river, on the tundra or in the mountains?

Think of the time that you were away from the village or the city experiencing the interplay of light, air, snow and soil—just yourself wrapped up in your own thoughts. When first out there, what did you think about? Did your thoughts begin to absorb your immediate environment? What did you begin to notice? Tree, flower, ant, raven, mouse, moss, ptarmigan, ice, stream, hill? Do these things of Mother Earth have a right to be, to have life? Does the tree have a community of life? Yes, it stores water, the roots have bacteria, it nourishes insects, soil, undergrowth, humus—a living community! Does the mouse have a community? It has a house, food storage, spouse, children, connecting tunnels, time for play, protection, shelter—carrying out life as all living creatures do. You see all soil, rivers, mountains, lakes, trees, wolves, bears, amoeba, e. coli, lichen, red squirrels, camp robbers, caigluq, cranberries, salmonberries—they all live with us in a large community.

You and I, who go out to be in and with nature, should know how to bond with all forms of life. They have a right to be, to live! All things are like us in many ways—they process energy, grow, reproduce, face dangers and do their best when the conditions of their homes and place are most suited to their needs. To be out in nature is to feel that you are cleansing yourself and getting a joy that can arise from being in touch with natural things, the creations of Ellam Yua.

This feeling of family is the most powerful of human bonds! We have to realize that they share our home in the cosmos, eat at our table, share our air and water and play with our children. We are composed of their bodies and they of us. Each of us are here on earth for a very short time. We let others see us for a while then, as other things, we must recycle. We are all related!

When we really experience the joy of life we become more polite and kind to all in the vast community. Being with and in nature, we begin to build love and respect for all life. Love is probably the strongest force in our world! Why love? Because love of the world around us causes us to limit the demands we put on Mother Earth, how much we buy and sell, moderating our needs and wants. It is this love that will allow us to give up some things and begin to limit what we have.

When we build up this respect, love, kindness and politeness in being with nature, we will not have to rely on alcohol and other things that bend the mind, because we become balanced physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. From such a balance will come joy in life.

Have a safe and happy holiday and new year!