

# CHAPTER 1

## LETTER FROM GAIA

“

There is no remedy  
but to love more.

- HENRY DAVID THOREAU

”

### ACTIVITIES

Create the class 'Talking Scepter'

5 Kingdom Treasure Hunt

### ECO ACTION

Plant A Tree

Be a Forest Protector!



Dear Children,

This is your Earth Mother. I am more than 4 billion years old and have been creating life in many ways and in many forms. I have been called many names by your ancestors: The Hawaiians refer to me as Papa'a, the ancient Romans called me Terra, to the Sumerians I was Gatumdu, to the ancient Greeks I was Gaia. You can just call me Earth Mother.

I am grateful and honored to be sharing with you my great love, care and concern for you and the future of our earth family. We have such an amazing family! How many incredible creatures can you think of? And yet, those are only a handful of the vast animal, plant, rock, mineral, water, bacteria and fungal species that share your home and work together to make the planet a living functioning system.

The main purpose of my writing is to ask each one of you to remember the connection you have within this web of life. Humans are very intelligent creatures. You have discovered and harnessed energy and created incredible machines! I am in awe of the ability you have developed to use machines for work, and how you connect with each other through computers. The information you have at your hands is earth boggling!

### CONNECTIONS – INVESTIGATION

- 5 Kingdoms of Nature
- Communicating with active listening
- Engage systems thinking

### OBJECTIVES

- Imagine the planet as a living system.
- Connect themselves to the 5 Kingdoms.
- Have empathy
- Creative problem solving

## GREEN POWER WORDS

### CARBON DIOXIDE

A colorless and odorless gas in the earth's atmosphere; it is composed of two oxygen atoms bonded to a carbon atom.

### FOSSIL FUELS

Coal, petroleum and natural gas. Fossil fuels take millions of years to form and are being used up faster than new ones are formed.

### FUNGI

Single-celled organisms that live by decomposing and absorbing the organic material in which they grow; these include molds, mushrooms and yeasts

### NUCLEUS

A large structure within a living cell that contains the cell's genetic material and controls its metabolism, growth, and reproduction.

### SYMBIOSIS

The intimate living together of 2 kinds of organisms that has mutual benefits for both.

### EXTINCTION

Dying out, referring to a species of living things.

### CONSUMPTION

Using up of goods, resources, or services.

### REGULATE

To control or adjust to a particular level or standard.

### ECOSYSTEM

A community of organisms that share a single habitat.

But my children, information without wisdom is dangerous. Wisdom allows you to see connections and nurture life. I am afraid many have forgotten the connections that are truly important. Where would you be if the sun did not shine to give you light, warm your bodies, grow your food and **regulate** cycles of wind and rain? How would you eat if the magic of the soil did not grow your food? What if the bacteria of the soil did not break down the wastes? What kind of creatures would you be if you could not breathe oxygen or if the earth's blanket, the atmosphere, did not regulate the earth's temperature? What if the earth could no longer provide these basic needs for you?

The earth is going through great changes as the growing numbers of humans require more and more resources. This **consumption** is drastically changing the face of the planet and affecting all of its creatures. If humans do not make changes in how they take from the planet, then there will be great suffering and many creatures will face **extinction**. These earthly companions are dependent on you for their very survival, but sadly, they could die out in your lifetime. This could happen because of rapidly changing climates and **ecosystems** that are the result of the way you consume resources and burn **fossil fuels** for energy.

Being a **Green Power Hero** is more than just switching from burning fossil fuels, conserving energy, recycling and saving water. Green Power also means growing a garden, planting trees, protecting forests and cleaning up wastes in the oceans. It is opening your heart so you may love this planet more each day. The Earth is a miraculous garden in the galaxy! It is so unique and rare that in the entire universe, there is no other place like it. If you remember this and love me more each day, you will learn how to take care of this precious place we all call home.

My friend Black Elk, a Native American Elder, wrote this poem:

*When the animals come to us,  
Asking for our help,  
Will we know what they are saying?*

*When the plants speak to us  
In their delicate, beautiful language,  
Will we be able to answer them?*

*When the planet Herself  
Sings to us in our dreams,  
Will we be able to wake ourselves and act?*

So AWAKEN your dreams Green Power Heroes! Use your own unique strengths and abilities to work for a clean energy future and start NOW!

Remember how much I love you! My love is in every breath you take and in the food you eat. I am in the oceans and the trees and in the animals and even in the fleas!

I am in you and you are in me -- we are connected.

Love forever,  
*Earth Mother*

## ACTIVITY

### CREATE YOUR 'TALKING SCEPTER'

*Time Required: 1 Class Period*

*Ages: All*

- Write a short vision statement (2 sentences long) or picture which shows his or her commitment to caring for our earth community.
- Scepter can be made with something from nature (rock, feather, tree branch etc...) OR Create a recycled trash artistic "scepter" as a group with each person adding one element.

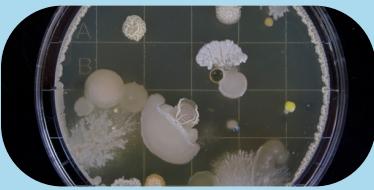
Use this process for the "Talking Circle" after each of the Green Power Hero chapters to engage discussion and ideas. Feel free to come up with own questions that will allow your group to reflect on the story.

- Share the guidelines for doing a class discussion. Possibly create a poster with these guidelines to remind the students about their responsibilities during the talking circle
  - 1. Gather in a circle so everyone can be seen. Some might be shy, but its OK. Everyone in the circle should be seen.
  - 2. The scepter travels around the circle with one person volunteering to begin by raising their hand after the question has been posed.
  - 3. Who ever has the "Talking Scepter" will respond to the discussion point. If they have no verbal response, they can give a quiet reflection into the "Talking Scepter" as their contribution to the Talking Circle.
- Use this talking circle & Green Power Hero Talking Scepter after each story, using the discussion questions as a guide for deeper reflection.



## THE 5 KINGDOMS

*"Kingdom"* is scientifically accepted, though you may refer to this as KINdoms or domains.



### BACTERIA KINGDOM

Can be defined as many creatures living intensively together taking care of all possible niches. All bacteria are characterized by the lack of a **nucleus**. They have been present on earth for about 3.5 billion years.



### ALGAE KINGDOM

Algae or Protists or Protocista is a mix of slime molds and algae. These are the first organisms to have a nucleus that controls the cell's activities. They have been around on earth for about a billion years.

## TALKING CIRCLE

GRAB THE SCEPTER TO DISCUSS...

Use the "Talking Scepter" you just created. When held the speaker gets complete attention and listening.

- How are we connected to the earth?
- Why do you think Earth Mother wrote us a letter?
- What is she asking of humans?
- Do you believe that the Earth has a voice and can communicate to us? Why or why not?
- Black Elk and many **Indigenous** people have a close relationship to Nature and can "talk and listen" to the plant and animal world. Read the poem again;
- Do you think that you could develop these skills?
- What would it take to do so?
- What do you think would happen if humans could hear the plant and animal world?

## ACTIVITY

### 5 KINGDOM TREASURE HUNT

Time Required: 35-45 minutes

Ages: 3rd to 6th Grade

Review the following 5 Kingdoms of nature. After discussing them, form groups of 3-5 to go on a 5 KINGDOM discovery hunt around the schoolyard to find examples of each. Have them take pictures or draw examples of their findings.



BACTERIA



PLANTS



PROTOCTISTA



ANIMALS



FUNGIUS

## THE 5 KINGDOMS (CONTINUED)



### FUNGUS KINGDOM

Fungi may be one-celled or many celled organisms. They are decomposers. Yeast, mold and mushrooms are an example of fungus.



### PLANT KINGDOM

Plants are many-celled organisms and the most recent arrival on earth. The oldest sign of a plant fossil is 400 million years old.



### ANIMAL KINGDOM

Animals have many cells and vary in shape, size and color. Humans, whales, elephants and worms are all examples. The largest number of animal species are worms. Animals date as far back as 700 million years.

## ECO ACTION PLANT A TREE

I don't think I ever did see an air conditioner as lovely as a tree...

Contact your local utility to see if they have a shade tree program that gives away free trees. Remember that trees are wonderful air and water cleaners and provide shade in the summer, reducing your need for air conditioning. Study your house or school with an adult to decide the best spot for your new tree. Trees also breathe in **carbon dioxide**, a greenhouse gas, and provide life-giving oxygen.

You could also think about planting a fruit tree in your own food forest. By planting edible plants around your fruit tree, you can have a steady supply of food in your yard!



“ To exist as a nation, to prosper as a state, and to live as a people, we must have trees. ”

- THOMAS JEFFERSON

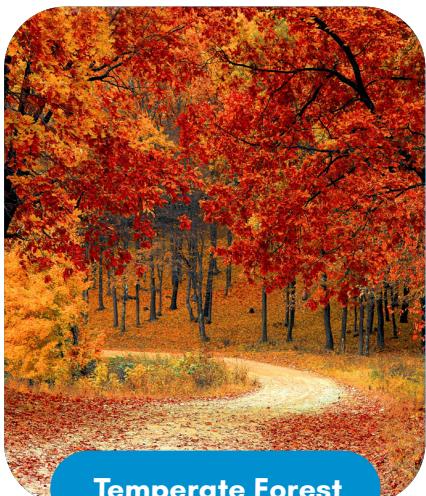
## ECO ACTION BE A FOREST PROTECTOR!



**Boreal Forest**



**Tropical Forest**



**Temperate Forest**

Forests contain all the Kingdoms of nature. Sadly less than 4% of the original forests remain in 2020. There are many pressures on forests from humans so it's important to understand our duty to keep them intact in order to protect our climate and the home of the most amazing plants and animals. Learn about the forests close to you and around the world so we can all be Forests Protectors!

There are three major types of forests, classed according to latitude:

- **Boreal** (Taiga): Trees are mostly of cold-tolerant with needle-like leaves, such as pine, fir, and spruce. Fauna include woodpeckers, hawks, moose, bear, weasel, lynx, fox, wolf, deer, hares, chipmunks, shrews, and bats. Because of extensive logging in boreal forests, they may soon disappear.
- **Tropical**: Trees are extremely diverse, with as many as 100 different species in one square kilometer. Trees are 25–35 m tall, mostly evergreen, with large dark green leaves. Plants include orchids, bromeliads, vines, ferns, mosses, and palms. Fauna include numerous birds, bats, small mammals, and insects.
- **Temperate**: Trees are distinguished by broad leaves that are lost annually and include such species as oak, hickory, beech, hemlock, maple, basswood, cottonwood, elm, willow, and spring-flowering herbs. Fauna include squirrels, rabbits, skunks, birds, deer, mountain lion, bobcat, timber wolf, fox, and black bear.



**Boreal  
Fauna**



**Tropical  
Fauna**



**Temperate  
Fauna**

## AUTUMN PELTIER

### A REAL LIFE GREEN POWER HERO!

Autumn Peltier is a world-renowned water-rights advocate and a leading global youth environmental activist. In April 2019, Peltier was appointed Chief Water Commissioner by the Anishinabek Nation and has spoken about the issue of contaminated water on Indigenous reserves in Canada at the United Nations. For her activism, Peltier was nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Autumn Peltier was born and raised on the shores of Lake Huron, one of the Great Lakes, the world's largest freshwater supply. Contaminated water on reserves in Canada — caused by a variety of factors including pollution and pipeline leaks — has been an ongoing problem.

Since 2015, the Canadian government has lifted 88 long-term drinking advisories, as they work toward cleaning contaminated water on reserves. However, as of February 2020, 61 long-term drinking water advisories remained in effect. The federal government acknowledged in December 2020 that its goal to get rid of the problem by March 2021 will not be met, though their efforts to eradicate boil-water advisories continue.

*"My aunt and mom have been teaching me about the importance of clean drinking water and how to protect the environment since I was a little girl.... I advocate for water because we all came from water and water is literally the only reason we are here today and living on this earth."*

- Autumn Peltier



Photo by Linda Roy, YES magazine