



### Creating a new 'Land Ethic' through IWM

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*"A land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such."*

Aldo Leopold, Land Ethic, Sand County Almanac, 1949

"Many people living in an urban environment, especially young people, have no idea what a natural, properly functioning creek should look like. Their 'norm' is often a channelized creek with hardened walls and bottom, with few trees, if any, along the banks. Or worse, they don't even know a creek exists because it has been put underground. Some had never played in a creek, which was unfathomable to me as a free-range kid from the prairies."

"Our collective 'baseline' or memory of what a healthy creek should look like has shifted significantly. Within the urban environs, this baseline had shifted even more through generations of development and decades of engineering practices designed to get the water off the land as quickly as possible. This approach to land development has resulted in a loss of hydrological and ecological function in many areas."

"Published in 1949, Aldo Leopold's 'Land Ethic' suggested that humans exist within an integrated community of life that also includes other animals, plants, rocks, soils and waters, collectively: the land. A

land ethic, he postulates, 'cannot prevent the alteration, management and use of these resources'. He argued that the health of the land is linked to the ways a community functions ecologically; to its capacity, under human use, to remain fertile and productive over the long term. Leopold heralded:

***"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."***

"A similar ethic is often echoed in conversations with First Nation colleagues in the Region. They have generously shared their land principles and helped me to understand their deep spiritual connection to the land and the resources it provides. Theirs is an age-old land ethic that is reinforced through customs and ceremonies, feasts and dance, and through stories of First Nations way of knowing and being. The teachings include that of interconnectivity which is critical to the health of our communities. A strong desire to return to traditional food harvesting practices requires actions closely aligned with improving watershed

health and creates opportunities to forge a new relationship with our First Nations neighbours, with whom we share this land. "

"A land ethic, Leopold proposed 'reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land'. The multi-jurisdictional nature of our watersheds requires the collective commitment of local and senior government agencies, First Nations, and communities to improve the health of our watersheds. Through IWM, utilizing a 'Design with Nature' approach, we are changing the way we develop our land by attempting to re-engineer the hydrological function back into our urban landscape and restore ecologically functioning pockets of nature. We are, in some ways, cultivating a new land ethic."

"I remain hopeful that by gathering together change-makers from First Nations, local governments and our communities to work towards a collective vision for healthy watersheds that we will emerge with a strong new land ethic here in the Capital Region. And over time, we will shift the baseline of a healthy creek closer to one which I held as a young girl."