

An abstract graphic featuring four blue circles of varying sizes, each composed of concentric circles. These circles are connected by thin, light blue lines that crisscross the page. The circles are positioned in the top right, middle right, middle left, and bottom right areas.

## Deep Social Networks and the Digital Fourth Way

"Starting from within, working in a circle, in a sacred manner, we develop and heal ourselves, our relationships, and the world."

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This paper is written for “changemakers” working with communities committed to making just and lasting change. It bridges linear and holistic thinking systems by applying ancient wisdom to a new medium of communication - social networks - and the emerging sharing economy. It offers a framework for designing what we call *deep social networks* that produce meaningful results and build deeper relationships that learn and grow in ways that sustain and enhance human life for all inhabitants of Mother Earth.

### **The Ancient Roots of Sustainable Development**

Recently much has been written about “sustainable development” and our efforts to steward our collective resources and live more harmoniously. We are at a defining moment in history and sustainability is no longer an option--it is an imperative. The 1987 United Nations report titled “Our Common Future” defines sustainable development as: “Development that meets the needs of the

"Our Common Future" quotes Louis Bruyere, President of the Native Council of Canada:

"Indigenous peoples are the base of what could be called the environmental security system. We are the gatekeepers of success or failure to husband our resources. For many of us, however, the last few centuries have meant a major loss of control over our lands and waters. We are still the first to know about changes in the environment, but we are now the last to be asked or consulted."

present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The report calls on us to go to the Indigenous Peoples and learn from them, since they have historically been the stewards and reservoir of the holistic knowledge that is necessary to care for our world. *However, the report offers nothing to ensure that this would happen or any suggestions on how to do this.*

In 1992, the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) issued a “Warning to Humanity”<sup>ii</sup> suggesting that humanity's ability to address global ecological threats and achieve sustainability will require major transformations of human behavior at all levels of human activity. The UCS Warning can be read as a call for new forms of culture. By focusing on cultural world views - a common concept of reality shared by a group of people - the more abstract and less visible dimensions of culture and relationships are recognized; and the differences between the dominant Western culture (linear cognitive processes) and that of Indigenous cultures (holistic cognitive processes) can be appreciated.

A *linear worldview* is a polarity-based, win-lose thinking system that is scientific, analytical, competitive and hierarchical. A *holistic worldview* is creative, spiritual, cooperative, harmonious and balanced. At this moment in time we need integrated solutions that synthesize and honor these distinct world views. By adapting our different thinking systems, we can remove barriers to mutual understanding and work together to shift the direction of cultural change.

Many Indigenous leaders are committed to sharing this holistic knowledge; in fact there are ancient prophecies<sup>iii</sup> that state that a time for bringing our cultural world views together would arise. This indigenous body of knowledge, handed down through generations by cultural transmission, deals with the relationship between living beings and their environment-- offering deep knowledge and wisdom to address the challenges we face today.

This process of unifying and synthesizing our knowledge systems can extend from the physical world to the digital world. Our online relationships can benefit greatly from adopting a principled approach to creating sustainable and harmonious on-line communities and enhanced physical realities. In this paper we will focus on the application of the Indigenous Fourth Way guiding principles to the design and development of *Deep Social Networks* online that sustain and enhance the lives of all who are living on Mother Earth.

### **The Knowledge of Knowledge Compels**

The core of the troubles we face today is our very ignorance of knowing. Reflection is a process of knowing how we know. It is an act of turning back upon ourselves. In Western culture we are oriented to action and not to reflection. We don't often think about how we think about things. Like all human beings we do not see what we do not see, and we behave as if what we do not see does not exist. For many of us, understanding multiple world views requires that we see what is not readily visible to us based upon our current thinking system. This blindness, if recognized, may be one of our best hopes for our future and opens the possibility of conceptual breakthroughs that can lead to us thinking and acting differently.

It is not knowledge, but the knowledge of knowledge that compels. It compels us to recognize that the world everyone sees is not *the* world but *a* world which we bring forth with others. *Every human act in language is an act of coexistence which gives rise to our world<sup>iv</sup>*. We only have the world that we create with others. And our world is challenged by social dilemmas<sup>v</sup> in which individual

personal interests are at odds with collective interests. These situations arise when we attach more weight to short-term self interests than to the long term interests of the whole.

Instead of win-lose, which is really lose-lose, we need creative win-win solutions that balance self-interest with our shared interest in the common good. Responding intelligently to this new world will require a much more sophisticated understanding of cooperation and cooperative strategy than we share today. We already know how to (1) dominate each other, (2) resist each other, and (3) give in to each other. We need another way, a Fourth Way, to relate to each other and the world we are bringing forth together.

### **The Fourth Way and the Ancient Prophecies**

The Fourth Way acknowledges that the human family is at a crossroad facing diverging paths: on one side lies the path of conflict, militarism, economic insecurity and war; on the other side lies a sacred path leading to mutual understanding, cooperation and sustainable, harmonious prosperity.

The Fourth Way is based on ancient prophecies, found throughout the Western Hemisphere, that state that after a long winter of death, deprivation, violence and despair, the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas would awaken to a new springtime of hope, cooperation and prosperity. Rooted in ancient principles, embedded in Indigenous culture, and expressed anew in its foundational Sixteen Principles, The Fourth Way is a path to these prophecies' fulfillment.

Over the centuries, Indigenous Peoples have responded to the cruel set of conditions created by the Western worldview in a variety of ways ranging from assimilation and passive resignation to resistance. At the same time, there has always been a powerful core of Indigenous elders and spiritual leaders who advocated holding on to the ancient spiritual vision of oneness, the human family and teaching the way out of this period of oppression and suffering. Indigenous Peoples have endured not through violence, but rather through healing the trust that was broken, and through building constructive partnerships with all nations and peoples.

**“The Fourth Way: Guiding Principles for Building a Sustainable and Harmonious World”** have been developed over 40 years of consultation on the part of indigenous elders, leaders, and thinkers. Here is the summary statement:

*Starting from within, working in a circle, in a sacred manner, we develop and heal ourselves, our relationships, and our world.*

## **Starting from Within**

### **1. Human Beings Can Transform Their Worlds**

The worldview of our relationships with others and the natural world, which has given rise to the problems we face as a human family, can be changed.

#### *Preamble*

We speak as one, guided by the sacred teachings and spiritual traditions of the Four Directions that uplift, guide, protect, warn, inspire and challenge the entire human family to live in ways that sustain and enhance human life and the life of all who dwell on Mother Earth, and hereby dedicate our lives and energies to healing and developing ourselves, the web of relationships that make our world, and the way we live with Mother Earth.

### **2. Development Comes from Within**

The process of human and community development unfolds from within each person, relationship, family organization, community or nation.

### **3. No Vision, No Development**

A vision of who we can become and what a sustainable world would be like, works as a powerful magnet, drawing us to our potential.

### **4. Healing is a Necessary Part of Development**

Healing the past, closing up old wounds, and learning healthy habits of thought and action to replace dysfunctional thinking and disruptive patterns of human relations is a necessary part of the process of sustainable development.

## **Working in a Circle**

### **5. Interconnectedness**

Everything is connected to everything else; therefore, any aspect of our healing and development is related to all the others (personal, social, cultural, political, economic, etc.). When we work on any one part the

whole circle is affected.

### **6. No Unity, No Development**

Unity means oneness. Without unity, the common oneness that makes (seemingly) separate human beings into “community” is impossible. Disunity is the primary disease of our community.

### **7. No Participation, No Development**

Participation is the active engagement of the minds, hearts, and energy of people in the process of their own healing and development.

## 8. Justice

Every person (regardless of gender, race, and religion) must be accorded equal opportunity to participate in the process of healing and development, and to receive a fair share of the benefits.

## In a Sacred Manner

### 9. Spirit

Human beings are both material and spiritual in nature. It is therefore inconceivable that the human community could become whole and sustainable without bringing our lives into balance with the requirements of our spiritual nature.

### 10. Morals and Ethics

Sustainable human and community development requires a moral foundation centered in the wisdom of the heart. When this foundation is lost, morals and ethical principles decline and development stops.

### 11. The Hurt of One Is the Hurt of All: The Honor of One is the Honor of All

The basic fact of our oneness as a human family means that development for some at the expense of well-being for others is not acceptable or sustainable.

### 12. Authentic Development is Culturally-Based

Healing and development must be rooted in the wisdom, knowledge and living processes of the culture of the people.

## We Heal and Develop Ourselves, Our Relationships and Our World

### 13. Learning

Human beings are learning beings. We begin learning while we are still in our mother's wombs, and unless something happens to close off our minds and paralyze our capacities, we keep learning throughout our entire lives. Learning is at the core of healing, development, and social change.

These are the 16 Four Worlds Guiding Principles. Fundamental, primary truths exemplified in the phenomena of the natural world. They are not doctrine, dogma, or require any beliefs. They can guide our behavior in pursuit of a more just, sustainable, and harmonious world. Guiding principles are for values clarification and offer a principle-centered approach to cooperating that has us look at what we are committed to achieve, and what is required for development processes to be effective.

#### 14. Sustainability

To sustain something means to enable it to continue for a long time. Authentic development is not dependent on finite resources; it does not use up or undermine what it needs to keep going.

#### 15. Move to the Positive

The best approach to solving the critical problems in our lives and communities is to visualize moving into the positive alternative that we wish to create by focusing on the strengths we already have, rather than on fighting the things we want to change.

#### 16. Be the Change You Want to See

The most powerful strategies for change always involve positive role modeling and the creation of living examples of the solutions we are proposing. By walking the path, we make the path visible.

#### **The Digital World: Amplified Voices Remixing Free-Culture**

Clarity of purpose, and alignment of principles in pursuit of that purpose, preserves the trust and cooperation needed to work together effectively. Taken as a set, they can serve as a “community operating system” and help maintain the integrity, transparency, accountability, and spirit needed to take care of our communities. The need for such a protocol is even more apparent when relating to each other in a digitized world. These principles can serve as a societal code for guiding our development and participation in what we’ll call “Deep Social Networks.”

Our digital mediated world has crossed a new threshold and we are now connected in new and more sophisticated ways. More than half the people on earth have mobile phones. The new media, often referred to as “social media”, has changed the limits of what is possible and is having profound effects on the centralized “main stream media”. In comparison to 1999, when 90% of people got their news from non-participatory media like radio, television and newspapers, in 2008 60% of people got their news from the Internet. In January 2004 there were less than 2 million blogs, in January 2007 there were over 70 million blogs, and in 2008 we crossed the 100 million blog number<sup>vi</sup>. Today, TV network news includes reports on viewer social interactions playing out on their blog posts, twitter tweets and Facebook pages.

We have moved from an age where a few people had the power to filter and select what many of us see, to an age where each of us can choose what we access and can then remix and reuse this content in our own creative processes. Instead of simply being consumers, now each of us can be a

media creator, producer and distributor. The Read/Write culture that Lawrence Lessig writes about in “Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy”, further expresses our ability to recombine creative works as a process of democratization, a “free- culture” of sharing. Today, for a relatively small investment, anyone with access to the internet possesses the powers of a printing press, a broadcasting station, and the means to assemble worldwide communities and marketplaces from the palm of their hand. We each have access to the works of millions of people, the people who made those works - if they are still alive - and the tools to make and distribute our own creative expressions.

We are also poised to move beyond the use of social networks for amusement and identity exploration. Social Networks such as Facebook and Twitter connect us to a steady stream of notifications about what the people we are paying attention to are up to. Social networks are a step in the right direction, but with the challenges we face today, we need more from each other-- we need to go deeper with each other. Many of us are bringing social networks to this next generation of use. We are embracing social networking tools to engage communities in political change, organizing without organizations, and the exploration of new economic models.

The election of Barack Obama demonstrated how these tools can be used for campaigns, advocacy, civic engagement, fundraising, collective intelligence, and large-scale collaboration. The Interra Project “democratizes philanthropy” by meshing social and financial networks to enable a community to embrace a sharing economy. The viral nature of social networks can feed an upward blossoming of collaboration and innovation in a pulsating web of relations, interconnections, and intentions connecting all of us. The choice is ours.

### **Introducing Deep Networks and the Digital Fourth Way**

The power of social networks opens the possibility of what we call “Deep Social Networks”. Beyond staying connected, in touch, and aware of each other’s activities, Deep Social Networks are shared public or private spaces for engaging each other and working on concerns that really matter to you and the people you care about. Members of Deep Social Networks are committed to produce something in their lives and the lives of others. Deep Social Networks are for building relationships, producing meaningful results, learning and growing together via a principled-approach to personal and community development. Whereas social networks connect our devices, Deep Social Networks connect our hearts and shared commitments for just and lasting change.



## **Toward a Framework for Designing Deep Networks**

This next section reflects on the art, science and spirit of designing Deep Networks that embody the guiding principles of the Fourth Way. It attempts to identify the integral parts and functions both necessary and sufficient to create a Deep Network within a holistic model of design. It is not a recipe to follow. Instead, it is born of an integrated knowledge system with the sixteen principles woven into this framework.

### **What do we mean by Deep”?**

Like a *deep breath*, or a *deep thought*, deep networks are not superficial. To “go deep” requires a willingness to be open, honest, trusting, and sincere with ourselves and with others.

Through deep connections members share knowledge and resources in a spirit of cooperation and for the attainment of a definite purpose while creating value and walking a sacred path.

Deep networks are about learning, giving and receiving, and represent a shift in how our culture operates.

Deep Networks recognize our interconnectedness and operate within a holistic and spiritual framework. Deep Networks manage shared resources in a collective manner, with special regard for equitable access, use, and sustainability. At the end of this section we will offer examples of Deep Social Networks we have developed and are in operation today.

The framework is presented as four distinct domains of possibilities and actions each corresponding to the four directions.



## **1. Co-Creative Leadership and Design**

Deep Networks have a clear purpose, principles, identity, structure, and direction. This is the seed. Without a positive vision, and a way to build together that draws us to our potential, there will be no development.

Co-creative leadership assumes that the situations we face are of our own making and that we can come together and build networks that make positive change. In this section we answer the questions: Why create a deep network? And how are deep networks organized?

### **1.1. Purpose, Principles, Vision and Mission**

Why create a Deep Network? By explicitly naming what identifies and binds a Deep Network together, members know its purpose, why it exists, and what they are making together. What members of Deep Networks commit to create and the principles that govern their behavior in pursuit of their purpose define the network.

A Deep Network is a healthy example of collaborative co-creative leadership and a win-win decision making model. Participant members organize around common concerns, objectives, outcomes, and issues that matter to the participants. By putting *value* and *values* at the core of a Deep Network we establish guiding criteria for making decisions, building relationships, and producing results. Through clarity of purpose, principles and intent, members extend their capacity to synchronize their actions with each other and with others outside the network.

## 1.2. Network Structure: Open and Self-Organizing

How do you organize a Deep Network? Self-organizing means that the growth of the network emerges and evolves overtime. Distinct from a centralized or decentralized organizational structure, self-organizing networks are distributed and flexible. There isn't one leader and the network of participants evolves over time. Removing a leadership node does not destroy the network, which simply reforms around a new node while keeping the periphery open to new participants. This lends itself to a shared leadership model with different people taking the lead on different activities.



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## **2. Learning, Planning, Knowing and Doing**

Deep Networks are made of members committed to plan, act, and learn together. Deep Network members recognize that development unfolds from within each person and everything is connected to everything else. We grow by learning and healing. With no unity there is no development. With no participation there is no development. In this section we answer the questions: How do you participate in a deep network? What do you do? What do you manage and measure?

### 2.1. Learning Circles at the Heart of Deep Networks

How do you participate in a Deep Network? For many of us these technological innovations and enhanced ways of relating are new and unfamiliar. A learning circle offers wholeness and a non-hierarchical way of relating to each other that assists in learning and growing. The circle configuration is a symbology of the "sacred hoop" of all life. Deep Networks need the input and

feedback that come from the circular context of learning and growing together. It is the heart of the network.

We are lifelong learners. Learning is preparing for the future. Learning to change with a changing world is vital to growing. Without learning, in the future we will repeat what we have done in the past. Our ways of relating with each other and the natural world have given rise to the problems we face. It is time to learn and change our ways of taking care of each other and our world. Learning is healing and healing is learning. Healing the past, closing up old wounds and learning healthy habits of thought, reflection, and action to replace dysfunctional thinking and disruptive patterns of human relations is a necessary part of the process of sustainable development.

## 2.2. Producing Results

What do you do in a Deep Network? A deep social network encourages its members to create, connect, collaborate, and share while engaging in four primary activities:

### 2.2.1. Peer to peer sharing

By starting from within, each network member has a "voice" made tangible as a profile page that gives each member a presence on the network. Our digital identities are virtual versions of ourselves that others can interact with in an asynchronous mode. Deep Networks blend synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication. Synchronous communication takes place at the *same time*, e.g. face to face, on the phone, teleconferences, instant messaging. Asynchronous communication allows us to interact with each other at *different times*, e.g. email, text messaging. People share peer-to-peer; from me to you, and you to me; and to my friends and to your friends; one to one, one to many, and many too many.

### 2.2.2. Small group activities

People also work together in small groups to produce results and communicate to organize and coordinate their activities and events. They need to be able to keep each other informed, make and keep track of commitments, and come to resolution through "decision-finding" and "decision-making" processes. Deep social networks are the platform upon which these small group activities get done.

### 2.2.3. Large-scale collaboration

Deep networks also enable many people to come together and collaborate on a scale the likes of which we've never seen before. The viral expansion capabilities of social networks make it so that ideas can easily be shared with large numbers of people, very quickly. But unlike non-participatory media, with social media we also gain the benefit of feedback and input from large numbers of people.

### 2.2.4. Community Hosting

Deep Networks require “Ninja Gardeners” who are part of a network’s “active core.” These Ninja Gardeners take responsibility for the network working and take care of its members and the content the members create and share. If the activities and results associated with the network are not meaningful and relevant to the network members it will not grow. It is up to the community hosts to make sure that the network is cared for and that its members are well served. It is very much like hosting a gathering; i.e. you invite people, welcome them, and make sure they are cared for while they are there.

## **2.3. Planning, Managing and Measuring Results**

What are the success factors? Fulfilling the mission of the network is to realize its purpose according to the service populations you defined. What do those you serve have to say about the network?

Clarity in design helps clarify what it means to be on purpose and what successful outcomes are.

Planning is a permanent ever evolving conversation. It isn't something to discuss a few times a year.

In the process of working together we are anticipating challenges and opportunities. Planning includes defining periodic milestones, speculating about different options, formulating actions.

Measures of a vibrant deep network include the size and growth measured by the number and diversity of members, levels of interactivity, and volume of contributions by its members.

Characteristics of a deep vibrant network include collaborative leadership and functional capabilities, openness to creativity and innovation, effective communication, learning and healing, collective intelligence, inclusiveness, flexibility and trust.



### **3. Relationships, Sharing and Taking Care of Our Gifts**

Belonging to a community not only makes you a part - belonging implies ownership, the community becomes yours. Networks are what we make of them. To sustain and grow a deep network, members must be sharing and maintaining resources and relationships. Every member is given an equal opportunity to participate and share in the development and the benefits.

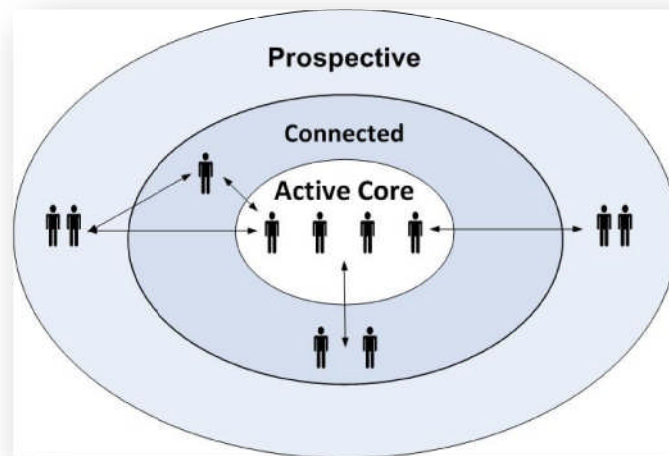
With the oneness of community and the realization of our interconnectedness we operate as if the hurt of one is the hurt of all and the honor of one is the honor of all. In this section we answer the questions: Who do you include? How do you encourage participation? How do you share resources?

#### **3.1. Participants: Inclusive, Diverse, and All Levels of Participation**

Who belongs in a Deep Network? All stakeholders with an interest in the purpose of the Deep Network being realized should be invited. Deep Networks are often intergenerational and cross-cultural. By including diverse points of view, we introduce thinking and practices that enrich the network and the results being produced. There is unity in diversity--you connect through your similarity and innovate through your diversity.

How much participation is required? Deep Networks energize participation via flow patterns and rhythmic cycles. Inviting and welcoming new people into the network i.e. the art of hospitality in an online environment is necessary for the network to form and grow. Everyone must feel at home.

A Deep Network needs an “active core” of participants. These are the people committed to the network’s mission and taking care of its members. Just a handful can do wonders. There are also “connected members” whose participation may be infrequent. Networks need all levels of participation. Some members will be connected and check-in only from time to time. They are just as important as the active core. Networks evolve naturally. If the bonds of trust, respect and shared purpose are strong, networks can deal with problems, improvise solutions, and imagine new directions.



### 3.2. Resources: Open and Easily Shared

How are individual and collective resources respected, protected, and shared? Deep Networks are managed as a commons and can create enormous value by turning what we have into what we need. In Deep Networks resources are easily discoverable and shared using open source principles and a free set of transparent licenses (e.g. Creative Commons) that overcome the complications of copyrights rules. Deep Networks contain community directories for description and discovery purposes that make it clear to members what can be shared and what rights are granted to whom.

Generosity of spirit and openness to creating new value out of shared open resources is a powerful dimension of the community commons and the value we can create in Deep Networks. Decentralized and distributed non-market mechanisms that do not depend on proprietary strategies are effective cooperative efforts offering a radically new way of creating wealth in a sharing economy.

## Reflection, Reverence, and Authenticity



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### **4. Reflection, Reverence, and Authenticity**

What makes a Deep Network sacred and harmonious? Reverence and respect for both material and spiritual aspects of life and the sanctity of life is at the heart of Deep Networks. Human beings are both material and spiritual in nature. It is therefore inconceivable that the human community could become whole and sustainable without bringing our lives into balance with the requirements of our spiritual nature. When the way of healing, peace, and partnership building is lost; morals and ethical principles decline and development stops.

#### **4.1. Knowing and the Knower are One**

Bringing our lives into balance requires going deep within ourselves and those closest to us. We know that the world will be different only if we live differently. Knowing that we need to change, and knowing what to change, does not guarantee that we will change. For change to happen we need the desire and the will for change. By combining awareness and commitment we create the will and the way to bring about lasting change. This is where knowing and the knower meets.

#### **4.2. Being the Change We Want to See**

There is no substitute for authenticity and being who we are. We are as sick as our deepest secrets. If we want to create a world that is effective and sustainable, people must be committed to learning new patterns of life and remembering to awaken the need to drive change processes themselves.



Development is deeply personal and comes from within. This active approach of entering into a creative relationship with life, and of making choices that will lead to the making of a better world is the choice of “stepping into history”. The urgency of today suggests that it is going to take “everybody all at once” to shift our culture by recognizing, respecting and adapting to our different cultures. To open up and see, hear, and love one another in our daily living.

As Lao Tse says: “In the end everyone will know that everyone did it.”

### **Examples of Deep Social Networks**

Here are examples of Deep Social Networks that we have developed:

His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Seattle in April 2008 as part of the Seeds of Compassion. One of the outcomes was the creation of a deep social network called the Compassionate Action Network [www.compassionateactionnetwork.com](http://www.compassionateactionnetwork.com). This network is used to help define, encourage, inspire and support compassionate action taking place locally and around the world. We created and maintain this network.

The Four Worlds International Institute transcends assimilation, resignation and conflict by building partnerships with all people. The Four Worlds International deep social network [www.fwii.net](http://www.fwii.net) is one of the organizing nodes in the creation of Indig.e.Net - a global network for linking up Indigenous Peoples to work together for community and economic development. We created and maintain this network.

The Natural Capital Institute initiated a project to create a non-commercial, open source, community directory to describe and discover all the organizations working for Justin lasting change. WiserEarth [www.wiserearth.org](http://www.wiserearth.org) has over 110,000 organizations and tens of thousands of individuals using this common pool resource to help make all of us aware of the work going on all around us and all around the world. We were a part of the original team that designed and launched WiserEarth and we remain active today.

The International Institute for Child Rights Development has funded the development of a deep social network for a community of practitioners focusing on the rights of the child. The deep social network Child Rights in Practice [www.childrightsinpractice.org](http://www.childrightsinpractice.org) exists to link together

creative solutions and strategies for making policy change as well as influencing public perception. We created and maintain this network.

We invite you to share other examples of Deep Networks. This paper is a draft and work in progress written by Jon Ramer and Phil Lane Jr. and your feedback is appreciated. You can contact us at [jramer@interraproject.org](mailto:jramer@interraproject.org) and [planejr@gmail.com](mailto:planejr@gmail.com).

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<sup>i</sup> Our Common Future (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)

<sup>ii</sup> 1992 World Scientists Warning to Humanity

<sup>iii</sup> The Eagle and the Condor

<sup>iv</sup> The Tree of Knowledge (Shambhala New Science Library, 1987)

<sup>v</sup> The social dilemma is defined as "rational individual choices that lead to poor group outcomes"

<sup>vi</sup> Technorati: State of the Blogosphere