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Help the grown-ups of tomorrow understand earth's peril

Sharon Abercrombie | Jul. 3, 2012 Eco Catholic

When today's children grow up, will they be more effective than we grown-ups have been in transforming this current earth-unfriendly paradigm into one that is more positive, sustainable and beautiful?

Awakening the Dreamer, an international environmental education project sponsored by The Pachamama Alliance in San Francisco, believes it is possible. Heidi Pohl, a workshop facilitator in Colombia, has posted a letter [1] on the organization's website describing how certified coaches there are adapting Dreamer workshop material for the kindergarten set.

Pohl said a group of 4- and 5-year-olds who have gone through the process are quite aware of the earth's plight.

"They know that animals are dying, that woods are disappearing, that big environmental disasters are happening, that people are suffering -- and somehow they have the sense that everything is connected," she writes.

Coaches worked with the kids using three concepts:

- Pachamama is our mother, who is worthy of love, who is ill right now and who needs us.
- There is a reality in the world and we can change it. It depends on us. We can make a new design, have a new dream, and we can make it together.
- Our hearts must be central to this new dream. Each of us needs to feel and give love and have a sense of being part of something bigger than ourselves.

Pohl came away encouraged by the workshop experience.

"We discovered that this generation of little kids has a different view of the environment than we did at this age," she writes. "They are already conscious about what is going on."

Here are some statements Pohl heard from these little ones:

"We need to love Pachamama and give her many kisses."

"Everything we have comes from Pachamama, for example, music instruments come out of trees.

"We are a family and the animals and plants are our friends."

"Everybody knows that we shouldn't throw trash away, but some adults keep doing it again and again and again. I don't understand why."

Pohl wonders why more adults are not seeing this connectivity with earth, as well.

The good news is an increasing number of grown-ups everywhere *are* becoming aware of the blessed kinship.

They are doing what they can at both the personal level and through environmental organizations. But it is difficult to change paradigms when the power brokers are still in charge.

A current case in point: On June 21, the U.S. Senate voted overwhelmingly against the Sanders Amendment, which would have allowed states to pass legislation that would require food and beverage products to label whether or not they contain genetically engineered ingredients. Charlotte Silver, a reporter for Inter Press Service, deems the legislation as particularly relevant because many states are preparing to vote on ballot initiatives that would do the same thing.

But once more, lobbyists are ruling the day. They are arguing that because food labeling has historically been handled by the Food and Drug Administration, it is a federal issue. Therefore individual states do not have the right to implement such legislation.

In Vermont, Bernie Sanders' home state, Monsanto intimidated the legislature from voting on a bill that would have required GMO labeling, Silver writes. In April, Vermont lawmakers allowed the bill to stall and die in the House Agriculture Committee after a representative from Monsanto threatened to sue the state if the bill passed.

"Significantly," Silver writes, "the Senate vote, 73-26 did not fall along partisan lines. Some 28 Democrats voted against it." How can this be? Patty Lovera, the assistant director of Food and Water Watch, told Silver the powerful biotech lobby informs how politicians vote.

"This doesn't happen overnight. It is a result of years and years of lobbying and pressure," she said.

In a November 2010 report published by Food and Water Watch, the largest food and agricultural biotechnology firms and trade associations spent a total of $572 million on campaign contributions and lobbying over the course of 10 years.

Ironically, the Senate vote comes despite global agreement that there is a need for GMO labeling, the article states.

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[1] http://www.pachamama.org/news/the-awakening-the-dreamer-symposium-through-the-eyes-of-kids