

# Introduction



*Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.*

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

What do we mean by *Planet Earth*, and is it really whispering to us? The word *Planet* comes from a Greek word meaning “wanderer” used to describe the movement of stars. *Earth* comes from an Old English word for the planet on which we live. *Eorthe*, *Tierra*, *Terra Mater*, *Gaia*, *Pachamama*, *Papatūānuku*, *Earth Mother* – no matter what name you choose to call our home, Planet Earth is a blue-green celestial body spinning through space around a golden sun. To many people however, it also has a living presence. For them, the cultivation of a relationship with the Spirit of our planet is an essential part of their daily lives.

In my own life, growing up barefoot around Australian aboriginal people who frequently disappeared into the wild bush country on ‘walkabout’, I learned by listening to their stories from an early age – something that all indigenous peoples have known for millennia. By trusting in the messages received from the Spirit within nature, all of our needs are catered for, from survival in any wilderness landscape, to a deep sense of belonging and spiritual connection with the land itself.

Seasonal ceremonies practiced by our ancestors, no matter which country they lived in, remind us that we are not just physical beings living in a material world, but that life on this planet also has a spiritual dimension. From the beginning of time, our sense of wholeness as human beings has involved a totality which unites spirit and matter, the human soul and the soul of the earth.

It was the Spirit living within matter which sparked our ancestors’ awareness of how all of the diverse parts of life exist in mutually supportive patterns of relationship. This interconnectedness between every living thing continues to sustain the eternal web of life, and allowed our ancestors to live in co-creative harmony with all life on Planet Earth.

The bright soul of the world, the *anima mundi*, has since ancient times been honored as the life-giving, divine principle within creation. It is this spiritual essence within the planet that is still asking to be heard. At the same time, the

soul of humanity yearns for reconnection, so that life on earth can once more become sacred.

The late mythologist Joseph Campbell once said that while many so-called *primitive* societies regard nature as something marvelous and miraculous, indeed a manifestation of the divine, our more modern view of the world has cut us off from nature and the sanctity of our own land, so that it no longer appears to speak to us of the divine.

Campbell said that this way of thinking has led us on pilgrimages to distant places we consider more holy, when we already have the potential to hold an awareness of the sacred in this present moment, on the very land where we now sit.

C. G. Jung believed that for our ancestors, the country they inhabited was also the landscape of their soul, which spoke to them in useful ways, helping them to find physical, social and spiritual nourishment.

In addition, he said that without our connection with the earth, we lose our natural instincts, living more and more ‘in our head’ through our ego, which leads us to feelings of isolation, alienation and disorientation, and to living what feels like a soulless, meaningless life.

The author Laurens van der Post believed that the psychic price we pay for being spiritually out of touch with nature is “a staggering loss of identity and meaning... a kind of loneliness, an inadequate comprehension of what life can be.”

When we feel ourselves at odds with the Spirit of the Earth, it’s easy to imagine that nature is somehow against us. Yet our ancestors knew that nature was not being unfriendly in times of poor seasons or inclement weather. Rather, they understood that they themselves needed to amend their alliance with nature, and to learn how to better live in harmony with her.

Anyone alive today on this planet will have noticed that it’s been a long time since modern society has considered our Earth as sacred, and that we are now living in a world where there is a deep split between spirit and matter.

Beyond the obvious concerns for the state of our environment, this has led us to experience vague feelings of restlessness and dissatisfaction, a feeling that something important is missing from life, and a deep longing for change, for something to be resolved or healed.

But this vital link between the soul of the world and the human soul can indeed be renewed, when we return to the practice of listening for the soft whispers of the planet, as our ancestors once did.

Our sense of separation and woundedness can also be healed when we forgive ourselves for forgetting our timeless human relationship with the Spirit of the living Earth, and listen again with our hearts.

As we heal the divisions between the human and planetary soul; as these two worlds are actively reunited and reborn within our own hearts, we ourselves are healed. We are then able to see the world with fresh eyes, and our passion for the wonder and magic of life is restored.

The resulting change in the way we then approach living on this planet holds within it the potential not only for deep inner peace, but the assured mutual futures of both humanity and Mother Earth.

Our ancestors knew how to receive whispered messages from the planet by noticing the movements of animals, birds and fish, and through watching for patterns in the wind, sea and sky. They also followed the guidance provided by nature in their dreams, often in the form of whispered messages from the spirits of birds, animals, rivers and trees.

In spite of much evidence to the contrary, people living in the modern, urban world have not lost the deep wisdom of their instincts, nor have they lost the ability to cultivate a collaborative relationship with the natural world. This is demonstrated in the joy and appreciation felt by city dwellers for even the smallest of gardens tucked away beneath forests of skyscrapers.

Though our natural instincts may be lying dormant within many of us, as long as we refrain from a pathological urge to dominate nature, and begin to work with her instead, we are all still fully capable of hearing the whispers of the planet at any time.

All it takes is to allow ourselves to listen more deeply.

We too can see the landscape of our own soul reflected back to us in the beauty and magic of the landscapes all around us. Through discovering and interacting with our own sacred sites, even in our own neighborhoods, these special places will in turn begin to recognize and respond to us.

When we truly connect with the roots of our own consciousness, deeply embedded within the soul of the planet, going beyond simply consuming nature's gifts, we too will receive the same spiritual nourishment from the land that our ancestors once did.

In this book, you will travel with professional Soul Guides and Spiritual Practitioners from all over the world, exploring new terrain and techniques that will help you experience the deep peace and timeless wisdom within the heart of our planet.

The personal experiences shared here reveal a variety of ways to forge a rich relationship with nature's wisdom, opening us up to an active communication with the living world we all share.

The stories speak for themselves. Each illustrates a different path taken by an individual author to reconnect with the soul of the world, enlivening their own soul in the process. Each journey is also an inner voyage from the head to the heart, to reawaken with clarity to the deeper potentials within their own lives.

These diverse and thought provoking stories demonstrate how the Earth is whispering to all of us in many different ways. Some seek solace in the silence of the wilderness to hear her speak, while others journey to sacred sites. Many discover signs and messages that expand and enrich their spiritual life right in their own back yard.

Nature is always whispering her teachings to us. Through deep listening, with

both our inner and outer ears, we can learn to live these teachings with wisdom and balance, and in the process, inspire, heal and uplift our own lives and the lives of those we touch.

By sharing these stories, the authors of this book hope that your own path of communication will be reawakened as you read them, so that you too will hear the whispers of the planet.

May these stories speak to your heart. And may your journey through *Planet Whispers* help you discover the power of these whispered messages to deeply nourish and refresh your soul.

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