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Long ago, there was time when, in place of multinational corporations, closely-knit tribes populated the western hemisphere. Their philosophy emphasizing reverence for nature guided their daily life. Their deep respect for and understanding of nature translated into a sustainable lifestyle, which was manifested in such practices as utilizing all parts of a killed animal so as not to waste any of their precious resources. These Native Americans had no concept of land ownership. By practicing this philosophy, they demonstrated recognition that the earth was not theirs to keep, but a gift that they would soon have to pass on to a new generation, who would also need the earth's resources. Consequently, they were cognizant to minimize adverse repercussions of their actions upon future generations. Indeed, through their eyes, the earth was being borrowed and had to be returned back not only to their children, but to the voiceless animals and plants as well.

In the modern era, this ancestral foresight seems to have all but disappeared in the name of "progress." Today, "sustainability" is an afterthought; the mindset of "act now, pay later" dictates everything from our economic and environmental policy to foreign affairs. Baby Boomers will likely be the last generation to receive the full benefits of the unreformed and underfunded Social Security system, leaving younger generations in the cold. The current economic recession was caused in part by the shortsighted greed that had banks and citizens loaning and borrowing unaccountable sums of money too difficult to recover or repay in the future. The misguided decision to wage the Iraq War focused narrowly on an ill-defined perception of danger at the time, while ignoring the horrendous cost of war in human lives. Our desire to pay cheap prices for oil have caused significant depletion of the global oil supply, comparatively high prices, and global climate change that threatens Earth's biochemistry and wildlife. Yet, despite all the evidence, so many of us continue to delude ourselves in believing that our "progressive" actions do not have dire consequences. If we do not pay these debts during our lifetime, our children soon will. Now is the time to make the difficult but necessary transition to a new era of responsibility and sustainability. We owe it to our children.

We need to build an economy based not on borrowing and debt, but based on sustainable investment in green infrastructure. We must curb our addiction to fossil fuels, and instead harness the power of renewable energy that our children too will be able to use. We need to preserve our oceans, skies, and forests from pollution and destruction, and trade our guns for a more constructive tool, diplomacy. In short, to ensure the future prosperity of the human race and Planet Earth, we must change not only our thinking, but our actions. In spite of what the land deeds say, we are not owners of the earth; we are merely its temporary tenants and guardians until future generations relieve us of our duties.