that sustain and support life on Earth. *Living in balance* is a
dominant aspect of traditional Native North American
cultures. This tradition can be a model for *Earth stewardship.*
Based on the *cycles of nature* and the *cycles of life* (Figure 1), a
positive, nurturing existence connected to the plant world and
all of nature is the foundation for a sustainable future on Earth.
The Abenaki traditions concerned with the gathering of plants
to be used for any purpose show a deep respect for the circle of
giving and receiving (see "Plants in the Wild: To Collect or
Not to Collect" in Chapter 2). These traditions are an example
of a reciprocal, sharing relationship with plants, which can be
used as a model for contemporary ways of living in balance in
today's world.

The traditional stewardship perspective of Native North
American cultures is one of considering the long-term
effects of our actions upon Earth and humanity. It is often
expressed in terms of doing things wisely and carefully while
keeping in mind the repercussions every action will have
upon the next *seven generations* of children to come. Decisions
are made considering the wisdom of the ancestors of seven
generations ago. Each of us is a seventh generation.

In our way of life, in our government, with every decision
we make, we always keep in mind the seventh generation
to come. It’s our job to see that the people coming ahead,
the generations still unborn, have a world no worse than
our— and hopefully better. When we walk upon Mother
Earth, we always plant our feet carefully because we know
the faces of our future generations are looking up at us from
beneath the ground. We never forget them.

—Chief Oren Lyons

*Owondaga*

5. Where does Cedar grow? From how many directions are
the winds blowing that spread Cedar's fragrance? How
many times does the Buffalo Bull roll on the ground? Why
do so many things happen in fours in Native North Ameri-
can stories? Why is the number 4 important?
4. What are Cedar's gifts to the People? What does Cedar
become a symbol of? Name some other giving plants and
describe how they help human beings.
5. Where do Native North American stories say people
first came from? Are people really related to plants and
animals? Why do you think so, or why not?
6. In what ways are plants and animals better adapted to
live in the natural world than are people?
7. What advantages do plants and animals have over
people? What advantages do we have over plants and animals?
8. How are plants used for healing and medicine by Native
North Americans? Can you think of any healing plants?
What medicines do you use that first came from plants?
9. What does "medicine" mean to Native North Americans?
How is this different from what it means to people who are not
Native North American? What does it mean to you?
10. Why is giving thanks important in Native North
American traditions? Do you think giving thanks is impor-
tant? Why or why not?
11. What does "all my relations" mean to Native North
Americans? Who are our Earth relations?
12. How can we heal our relationships with plants and
animals? What changes must we make?
13. What do we need to do to take care of "all our relations"?
What can you do?
14. Why is it important to do things in the way of a circle
to keep our relations well and our families strong on Earth?
What is the circle of giving and receiving?
15. What do you think of when someone says "Indian giver"?
What is the real story behind this term? How do Native
peoples keep the circle of giving and receiving strong?
16. What does it mean to live in balance? Why is this
important to becoming wise Earth stewards?
17. What does it mean to live each day and care for each other
and Earth with the next seven generations in our hearts?

ACTIVITIES

Growing Your Green Heart

**ACTIVITY:** Take a fantasy journey to find the seed in your
heart. Grow into a green plant that spreads its branches and
roots to reach out and connect with all life in a caring way.
Make a "green heart" to represent the strength and qualities
of the plant you choose to become.

**GOALS:** Visualize the green branches and roots of a plant
that connect you to all parts of Earth. Understand how to
bring to life a seed growing inside of you, by watching, listening and being quiet and receptive. Imagine how a seed, and your green heart, can grow into a nurturing plant that helps you to touch, heal and have a positive relationship with the life in your surroundings.

AGE: Younger children and older children

MATERIALS: Copy of the fantasy “Growing Your Green Heart,” pencils, crayons, felt-tipped pens, writing paper and construction paper, scissors, strips of newspaper, wheat paste, water, paints, brushes, tempera paints, other supplies needed for chosen projects, calming music and equipment on which to play it (optional).

PROCEDURE: Prepare the children for the fantasy as described under “Leading the Guided Fantasies” in Chapter 2. They are going to feel and experience the events that happen during the fantasy and can grow into any plant they desire as they discover the seed of their green heart. It could be a plant they know or an entirely new kind of plant. Now read “Growing Your Green Heart” to the children.

Note: You may want to play calming music as you read this journey.

Growing Your Green Heart

You are a small seed sitting on top of a beautiful hill. Your roots are deep in the soil and your green heart is warm and moist. The bright sun is warming you inside and out. From this place you can look out over Earth in all directions. Every place you look the landscape is covered with rolling hills, green forests and earth. Some gray clouds blow over the face of the sun and a gentle wind begins to fall. The warm scent of fresh green rain surrounds you. Soon, the clouds pass and the warm sun slowly begins to return. Take some time to look around you in all directions.

Slowly, you feel something inside of you pushing down into the soil. A root begins to grow through the soil and starts to push down into the soil. You can feel the root absorbing water and minerals to help you grow.

Now a shoot emerges from the top of the seed and grows upward through the sky. You are growing in both directions: down into the rich earth and up into the fresh air that swirls around you. Each sinking root and rising shoot keeps branching and following new pathways. Your roots grow slowly, but they are amazingly strong as they push their way through the soil. Green leaves use the bright sunlight to create food that flows through your sap to feed all parts of you. Leaves and flowers begin to form on your branches. Listen to the wind rustling through your leaves. Smell the petals of your flowers.

Imagine what you look like. What color of green are your leaves? What color do your flower petals form? How big are you? As your flowers grow, what do they turn into: fruits, nuts, vegetables or something new that you have never seen before?

These branches, these roots, are your new way of reaching out and touching the world around you. The air passing into the pores on your leaves is a breath shared with all other living things. The water being taken up by your roots has been part of other living things before you, and will again become part of other living things once it evaporates from your green leaves and forms new rain clouds. Listen to the water flowing through you. The soil feeding your new growth will one day be fed by your remains when you die and decompose.

An animal walks by and picks some food off your branches. How does it feel to give food to that animal?

You are part of all Earth, and it is part of you. You now have a growing, green heart that cares and wants to be cared for. It is up to you to connect in a good way with Earth, both those things that are alive and those, like the soil, that are not alive. Because you and Earth are one, what you do to Earth, you do to yourself. Use the patient wisdom of your green heart to heal and live in a good way.

Have each child draw a picture of the plant she or he became and take a name for that plant. Invite the children to share the illustration with the group. Emphasize that it is their choice to share or not to share. Have those who share describe their plant, say its name and tell the others what it tastes like, what the wind sounds like blowing through its branches, how deep its roots go and how high its branches reach, how the sap tastes. Ask each child to describe how his or her plant reaches out to other parts of Earth, and what good qualities the plant has because of its caring green heart, such as kindness, generosity and gentleness. Tell the children that, in Abenaki tradition, the first people stepped alive from an ash tree with hearts that were growing and green wherever Gluskabe, the Transformer, shot arrows of life into the tree.

Have the children create a story of how their plant, their green heart, is going to help them to care for and heal Earth around them. Help them to brainstorm and think of ways to help all plants, and especially those they have chosen to be. Ask each child to commit to follow through on some specific projects that will put these ideas into action.

Help each child to create a small paper mâché heart. Have her or him paint the heart green, and then draw a picture of her or his plant upon it. Their green hearts will give them the strength and qualities of their plant. Encourage the children to use their plant names whenever they want.

Make up your own activities to continue the children’s relationships with their plants and the healing qualities those plants represent. Keep referring back to these caring plants as you continue using the stories and activities throughout this book. Encourage the children to use their green hearts to help them care for, heal and take care of Earth and other people.

Seventh-Generation Stewardship

ACTIVITY: Plant and nurture a flower, tree or other plant over the course of seven visits. List the survival needs of