



HIERARCHIES OF CREATION

*Excerpt from a speech called
RedTalks
by Elder Dr. Duke Redbird*

In the past, Indigenous People were informed by our symbiotic relationship with the Earth and our cultures always recognized that human survival depended upon this symbiotic relationship with nature. Our purpose was always to care for Mother Earth and cherish Her benevolence knowing that if we took care of her, she would take care of us.

Native People saw the Earth as our mother and that in the hierarchy of creation she came first, followed by plants and vegetation because they fed us, healed us, and opened our consciousness to visions. After the plants came the animals who we described historically as “creature teachers”. And last, but not least, humanity. The Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island consider ourselves, even today, as the stewards of the environment.

The Indigenous Peoples who populated the vast forest and lake regions of Eastern Canada lived in tranquility and harmony with the land. Our forests were home to a multitude of creatures from the majestic moose to the tiny deer mouse, the forest gave shelter, sustenance and life. Our lakes teemed with all manner of marine species. In fact, early explorers from Europe told of being able to lower

baskets into the rivers and retrieve them full of fish; our skies in the fall were darkened by masses of birds heading south. Early settlers reported that the sun was virtually blocked out for days during the annual migration of the passenger pigeons. Amidst all this abundance our Indigenous Peoples lived in a condition of security and well-being that was the envy of the Europeans who first made contact with our people.

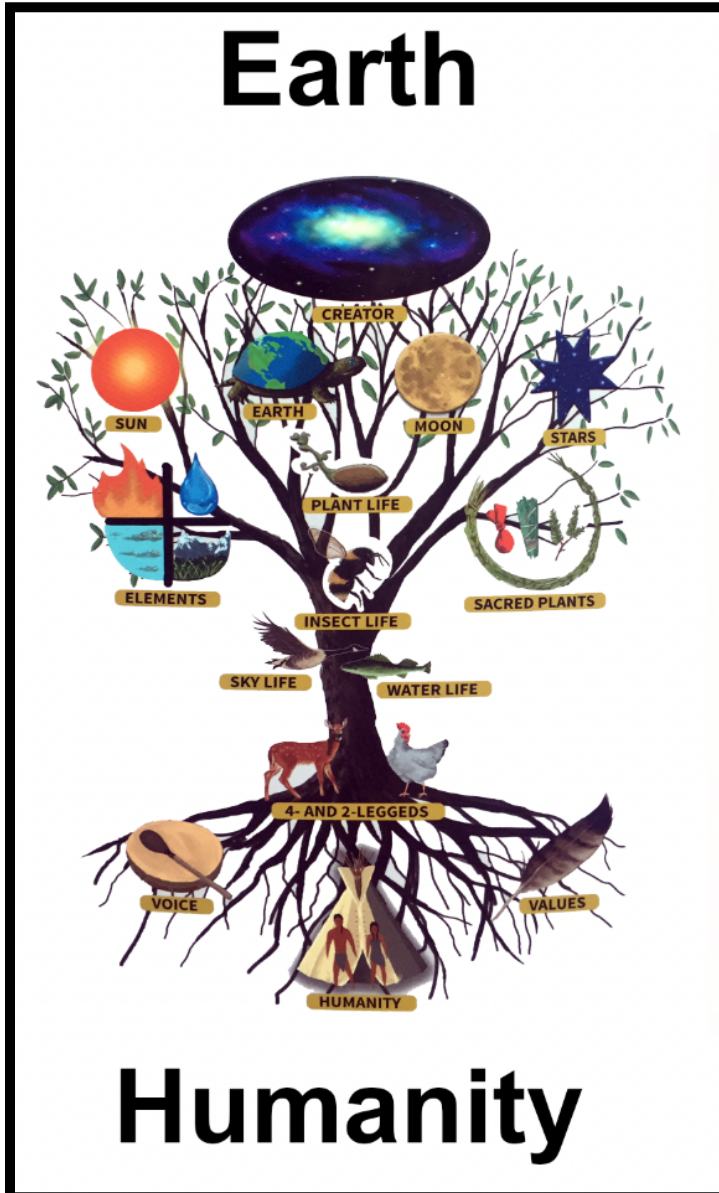
When reports of the New World began to filter back to Europe, academics of that day were astounded to learn that the Indigenous people of North America resided in harmony with the Earth and were at peace with their neighbors. It seemed impossible to a fifteenth-century European that whole nations could exist with complicated social structures, without the so-called essentials of civilization.

Indigenous cultures lived in harmony with the land. We learned to change ourselves to suit nature rather than attempt - as the Empires of the Old World had done - to change nature to suit themselves. In 1492, the Colonial Power's from Europe brought with them to the Americas what they believed to be an infallible truth. This truth, delivered by their God, was that all humans are born with Original Sin and that only Christians are entitled to have dominion over the earth and all her manifold resources. It is a European idea that humans are superior in the hierarchy of creation, and are driven to impose man's will upon the geography and the environment that he inhabits.

This idea that man is paramount in the hierarchy of creation and should impose his will on a wise and sacred universe is foreign to the native way of thinking. Many Indigenous people believe that the dominant culture's constant meddling and interference with this perfection is at best profane and at worst criminal. A wise human

being lives life avoiding the pitfalls of profaning the sacred while at the same time seeks to bring the sacred into the house of the profane.

INDIGENOUS HIERARCHY OF CREATION:



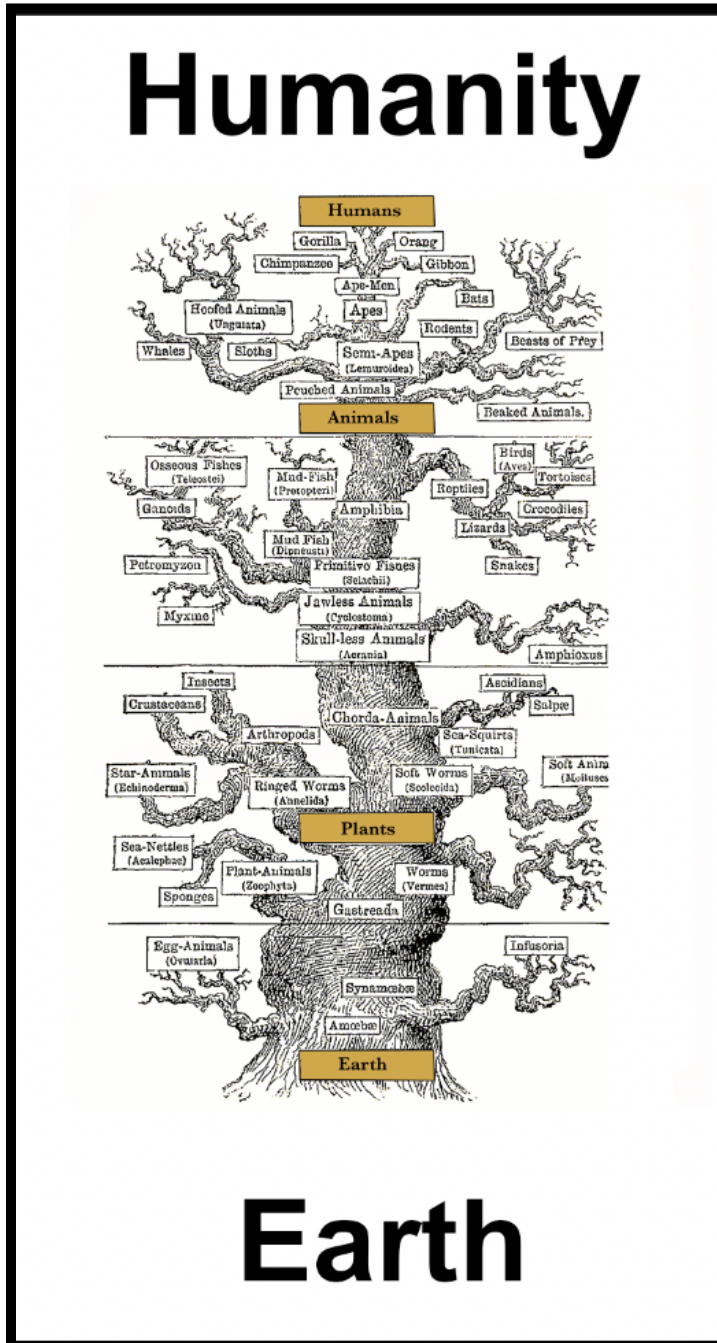
1. Mother Earth who is central to existence & sacred

2. Plants and vegetation heal, feed, and many have psychedelic properties that inspire our imaginations with visions.

3. The creatures are teachers and guide us on our journey

4. Human beings last but not least.

THE EUROPEAN HIERARCHY OF CREATION



1. Human beings first after God, given total dominion over the earth and all creatures.

2. Animals and creatures considered inferior and less intelligent, they exist only to serve, accompany, and feed.

3. Plants exist only as a food source and have no consciousness.

4. Mother Earth comes last, and along with animals and plants She is considered profane

