

## Peace, health, happiness, and animals



By Nate Smelle

Anyone who has spent a significant amount of time with a non-human animal or animals knows how unique each being truly is. Whether a dog, a cat, a pig, a chicken, a horse, or any species for that matter, the character each individual possesses distinguishes it from other individuals of the same species.

For most of us, the easiest way to relate to this observable truth is through the relationship we share with our animal companions. Similar to humans, there are commonalities between individuals. Some like eating and sleeping, while others prefer playing and exploring the outdoors. Some are social creatures, eager to become acquainted with others. Some prefer solitude and the company of a select few.

Over time, each creature develops its own character according to its experiences and perceptions of the environment it inhabits. By means of interacting with its living conditions each animal develops a distinct understanding of its place within the world it is a part of.

Through this awareness of its surroundings it learns which aspects of its existence are enjoyable - the individual creatures, places, and things that bring it peace, health, and happiness. Likewise, it is taught through its experience which individual creatures, places, and things deliver it with feelings of fear, anger, discomfort, and suffering.

As an individual's awareness and understanding of the world expands, its consciousness evolves. The more conscious of its existence a being becomes, the more it chooses to immerse itself in conditions and experiences it deems favourable.

Working from home during the pandemic, as many of us have become accustomed to, I have been keeping a close eye on the daily routines of the non-human animals sharing my environment. Whether observing my cat's day-to-day priorities, or the habits of the birds, deer, porcupine, rabbits, and chickens visiting my backyard, every conscious being actively pursues peace, happiness, and health.

That is of course until I turn on the news. For one reason or another, unlike any other species on the planet, humans appear to be focused on fowling our nest, and destroying the living conditions our Earth provides. Why this is, I do not know. However, what I do know, is that every other species seems to have developed a way of life throughout the course of its evolution that jives with the healthy functioning of its ecosystem. As humans, we like to place ourselves on a pedestal, and elevate our status above our non-human neighbours.

With Earth Day just around the corner, rather than continuing to perpetuate this misconception of superiority, why not take a moment to observe the animals in our midst and see what we can learn from their harmonious lifestyles?

Chief Seattle of the Suquamish and Duwamish First Nations shared his observations of this natural harmony among species, when he declared, "Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."