RIGHTS OF SOIL & RIVERS

2023 Food Justice Summit
The Wild Center, Tupper Lake, NY
Haudenosaunee Territory

We would like to begin...

by **ACKNOWLEDGING** that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of Haudenosaunee Peoples, specifically the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk).

Those of us who are part of this colonial society **ACKNOWLEDGE** our role as settlers on this territory, honoring those who have fulfilled their roles and responsibilities to this land and water since time immemorial.

In addition, we express our **GRATITUDE** to Trees, Animals, Water, and all beings that sustain this interwoven tapestry of life.

“Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes.”

(Ecuadorian Constitution, Art. 71)

(Art: Tzintzun V.Aguilar-Izzo)

WHAT ARE RIGHTS OF NATURE?

- Recognition of the **legally enforceable rights** of nature, ecosystems, and species.
- **CIVIL RIGHTS-TYPE** protections for nature.
- **Augment or strengthen** existing environmental laws.
- Expanded **STANDING** for enforcement.
- Creates **new and elevated standards** of protection for ecosystems.
- **RESTORATION** required as a remedy.
- Champions an **ECOCENTRIC** worldview

ECOCENTRIC WORLDVIEW

- **Nature** is **not a commodity**
- Human beings are **just another species** among others, all part of the natural world
- **Rivers and entire ecosystems** are living entities, just like biological organisms
- This worldview has been imbedded in customary law since time immemorial
- From the microorganisms in the soil to the water of the rivers, we're all part of an interwoven tapestry of life

(Art: Blake Lavia)

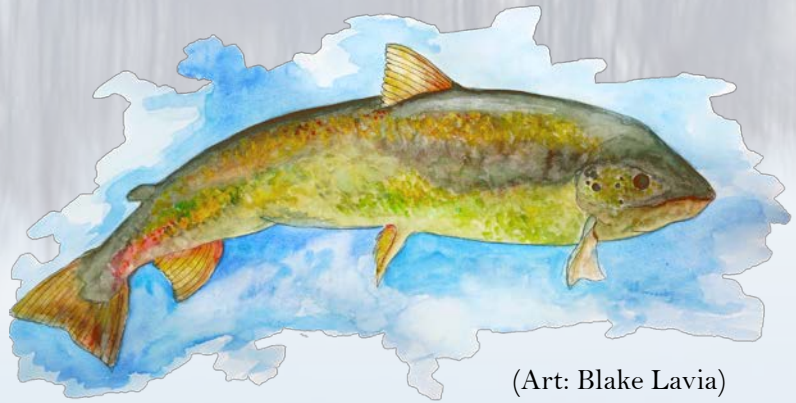
RIGHTS OF NATURE TIMELINE

- **Tamaqua Borough, Pennsylvania (2006)** - First Rights of Nature Law
- **Ecuador (2008)** – Included Rights of Nature in Constitution
- **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (2010)** – First USA city to pass Rights of Nature law
- **Santa Monica, California (2013)** – Adopted Rights of Nature law
- **New Zealand (2014)** – Grants rights to National Park & river
- **White Earth Ojibwe, Minnesota (2018)** - Recognizing rights of wild rice ("manoomin")
- **Panama (2022)** - National legislature adopts rights of nature law
- **Spain (2022)** – National Legislator grants rights to the Mar Menor salt lake

CURRENT CASE ON TURTLE ISLAND

- 2021 – the **White Earth Band is** seeking to overturn a five-billion-gallon water permit issued by the State of Minnesota to the Enbridge Corporation Line #3 pipeline. Primary plaintiff is **MANOOMIN or "wild rice."**

- In January 2022, the **Sauk-Suiattle Tribe** filed suit to force the City of Seattle to build fish passage around the Skagit River Dam. Primary plaintiff is **SALMON.**



(Art: Blake Lavia)

WHERE HAS ANTHROPOCENTRIC LAW GOT US?

- **90 percent** of the old growth forest in the United states have vanished
- **53 percent** of wetlands are no more
- **9,000 species** one USA territory face extinctions
- **95 percent** of the "American" public that risk lung cancer by breathing
- **4 billion toxic pollutants** are released into the air and water each year
- **More then 15,000 permits** that have been issued under the Clean Air act across the united states to industries
- **In two months in 2007** regulatory agencies across 36 states issued 2,632 exceptions to the clean air act to polluters

(Art: Blake Lavia)

WHY DO WE NEED RIGHTS OF NATURE?

- Current Federal & State legislation **often fall short** of adequate protection.

- Can't rely on current protections to continue to exist. Supreme Court is even reexamining the Clean Water Act.

- Rights of Nature **gives agency to local citizens** to act on behalf of the natural entities in their communities.

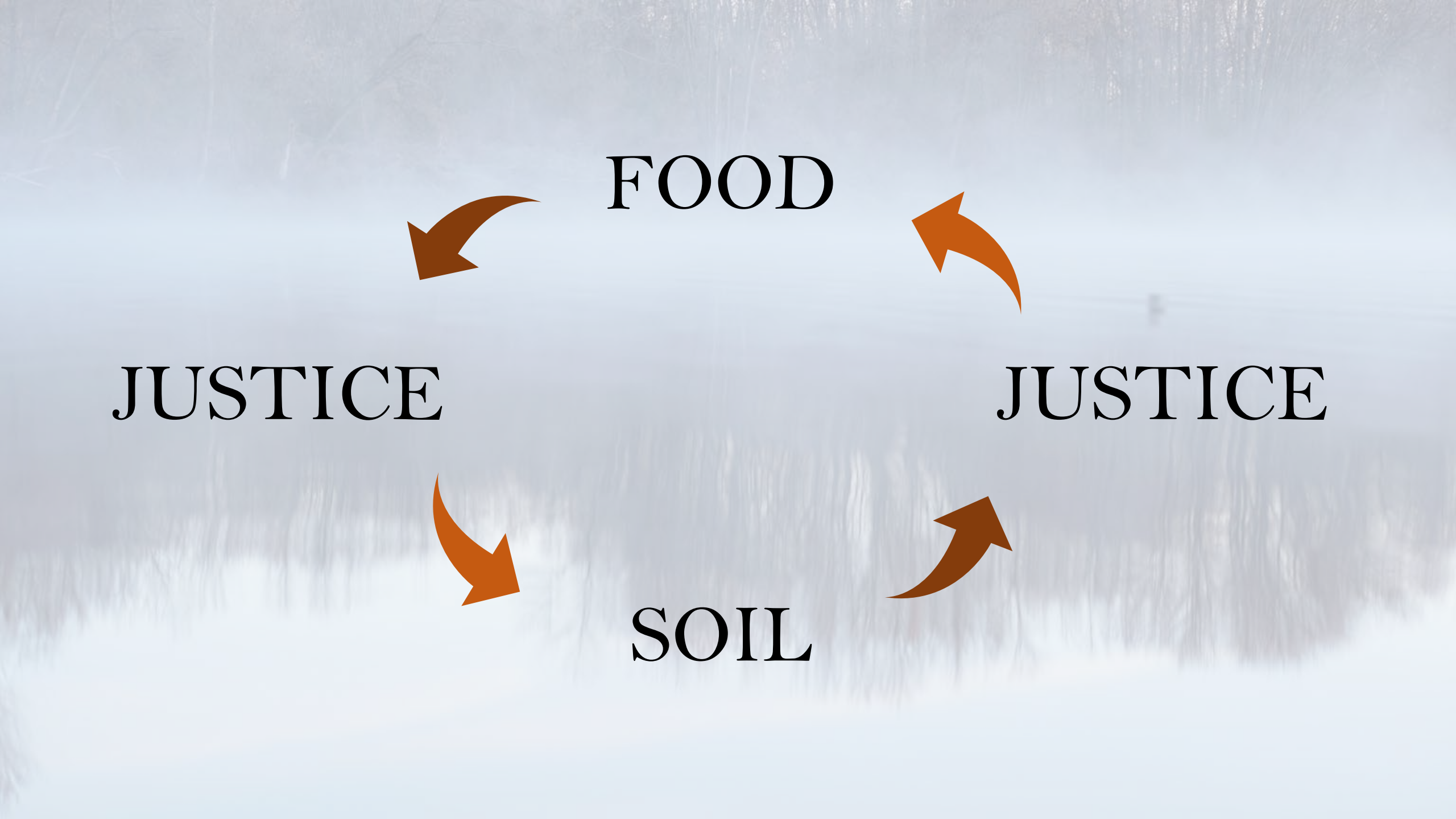
(Art: Tzintzun V. Aguilar-Izzo)

(Art: Blake Lavia)

WHAT DO THE LAWS LOOK LIKE?

- **DECLARATION** of legal rights
- **RECOGNITION** of standing of nature and residents, or tribal members
- **REQUIREMENT** of remedy, including requirement of restoration.

(Art: Tzintzun V. Aguilar-Izzo)


FOOD
JUSTICE
JUSTICE
SOIL

(Art: Tzintzun V. Aguilar-Izzo)

SOIL AS RIGHTHOLDER

- Soil is a **complex ecosystem** humans barely understand
- Humans, the Climate and all life on Earth depend on this vital ecosystem
- **Soil is under threat** everywhere and receives minimal legal protection
- **It is time that Humans stand with soil**, protecting all organism and nutrients that keep life flourishing

(Art: Tzintzun V. Aguilar-Izzo)

PROTECTING **SOIL** = PROTECTING **WATERSHEDS**

(Art: Blake Lavia)