



The Earth Stories Collection & the Project NEEDS

A Proposal to Turn Conscience into Action

By Grian Cutanda (October, 2022)

Over the past year, The Earth Stories Collection (TESC) has received a strong boost in Europe through its inclusion in the educational activities implemented through the NEEDS Project of the Earth Charter European Network.

The Earth Stories Collection is a global educational project closely linked to the Earth Charter. It arises from research developed at the University of Granada (Cutanda, 2016, 2019), under the methodological supervision by Dr. Jane Brown, from the University of Edinburgh, on the need for a change of worldview in our civilisation, in order to mitigate the serious consequences that climate change and the mass extinction of species are already announcing.

Through this attempt to transform the collective worldview of our societies, it was understood that the best means was the fundamental educational tool with which worldviews have always been transmitted in all cultures: the traditional story, i.e. myths, legends, fables and folktales. For this initial research, I read about 2,000 traditional stories from around the world and selected 336 through the criteria of stories that could illustrate a principle or a fragment of the Earth Charter, a global, multicultural document which is a faithful reflection of the complex systems, ecocentric and integrative worldview that we need to develop as humanity. Then, I carefully analyzed the content of 126 of them to conclude my doctoral research. Out of this emerged TESC project, which seeks to continue to respond to the need of collecting traditional stories from around the world, that are capable of illustrating the principles and values of the Earth Charter and ensure that these stories can be freely accessed.

TESC currently has 75 stories from 56 nations, 35 cultures and 18 spiritual or philosophical traditions, all of which can be downloaded freely from our website. These stories can be utilized by educators, storytellers or activists in their context of work to stimulate creativity and understanding about the worldview and values articulated in the Earth Charter. This collection of myths, legends and tales will soon be joined by 35 more stories from 34 countries, 20 cultures and 6 spiritual traditions, with the publication of a new volume – the third in the Collection. With this, TESC will reach 110 traditional stories. Some of them are under public domain, but most of them required



adaptation, given that they have copy rights. Hence the adaptation of most of them is required to ensure they have free access under the Creative Commons license. The stories are accessible in three languages, English, [Spanish](#) and [Portuguese](#), the latter having been recently added thanks to the extensive volunteer translation work done by Waverli Neuberger, Joana Parise and Cristina Moreno, Earth Charter International Advisors and close collaborators from Brazil.

This major multicultural educational project, in which the Earth Charter International Secretariat and the [Scottish International Storytelling Festival](#) (SISF) (one of the festivals of the prestigious Edinburgh Festival) are working in close collaboration, has been joined, also this year, by a new global project proposed by Donald Smith, founder and first director of the National Theatre of Scotland and director of the SISF. The idea proposed by Donald Smith is to create a global network of *storytelling activists* who are committed to spreading the Earth Stories and the principles of the Earth Charter around the world. Thus, this very year, 2022, this network was launched under the name of [Earth Story Tellers](#) (EST), which holds bimonthly online meetings in English and Spanish, and to which 50 people from 19 countries belong at the moment. This network aims to be a place of exchange of experiences with Earth Stories in any field of activity where formal, non-formal and informal educational work can be undertaken for the transformation of the collective worldview.

And, as we pointed out at the beginning, this whole cluster of projects and initiatives linked to the Avalon Project has received an important boost through their inclusion in the educational activities of the Project NEEDS, implemented by the [Earth Charter European Network](#) with the funding of the European Union's [Erasmus+ Programme](#). Together with six other organisations – from Germany, Bulgaria, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and Sweden – we have been building since 2021, a network of collaboration and mutual support that is yielding magnificent results, allowing us to share experiences, ideas and educational proposals stemming from the creativity of the different groups. In this regard, TESC has received a general welcome and support from our European partners, who have begun to integrate Earth Stories into their Earth Charter education and outreach work. An outstanding example of this is our partners at the Ökumenische Initiative Eine Welt in Germany, that has begun to translate TESC stories into German and include them in their quarterly magazine.

However, beyond the educational sphere, the most human benefit of being part of NEEDS has been the bonds of affection established with so many colleagues from the Earth Charter European Network. These bonds have been developed day by day through the different meetings and coexistence events held during the last year and a half in the different countries. From this connection and shared human experiences has come the



drive to keep relating to each other through new educational projects, one of which would be dedicated exclusively to Earth Stories.

But perhaps most significant of all for those of us who work at Avalon are the developments that took place at our last gathering, organised by Green Cross Sweden on the island of Ekskärret (September 2022), although the ideas began to take shape at the Netherlands meeting in June 2022. At these meetings, we began to jointly weigh the need to step forward, as Earth Charter affiliates, to address the problem of climate change and the mass extinction of species, a problem that has become palpable evidence to the world over the past summer in the northern hemisphere. The lack of urgent and forceful responses from governments from around the world and markets has led us to consider the need to make bolder proposals insofar as *we are part* of the Earth Charter movement, a global movement that was born to try to precisely avoid this disaster.

From there, and in direct relation to TESC, the proposal emerged in the group to try to mobilise societies, to ‘turn conscience into action’ through the derivations of the second research published by TESC regarding stories (Cutanda, 2020), a research related to the *myths of the future*. This new proposal would be included in the Earth Stories project that the EC European Network is already preparing for next year. It is a project that we intend to take beyond European borders to share with the Earth Charter network worldwide. The title of Avalon's new educational project will be named after one of the most important myths of the future studied in this research: **Rainbow Warriors**. This will be a challenge for the activation and mobilisation of the global civil society in the face of what the international scientific community – and more specifically the IPCC group of scientists through their leaks to France Press and Extinction Rebellion Spain last year (AFP, 2021; Bordera y Prieto, 2021; Bordera *et al.*, 2021) – is being described as *a probable collapse of our civilisation due to the collapse of terrestrial ecosystems*. The aim is to set humanity on a new course based on social and ecological justice.

This is what we intend to talk about during our presentation at the Earth Charter International Conference in December 2022, with the conviction that those of us who are part of the Earth Charter international network will have to be at the forefront of *action* in the face of the Earth emergency we are witnessing, if only for a simple matter of consistency with the ethical principles we have been defending for so many years.

For more information and to get in touch with us:

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