

You can see it in their eyes as you walk on the beach — the joy of children, families, dogs and lovers, the joy of being in this spectacular place on earth. How did we get to be so lucky that when we are here, we are home? Our gratitude for this blessing must be lived out every day. Blessings come with responsibilities.

What you do next really matters. As the humans in this place, we have taken it upon ourselves to decide who gets to enjoy Cannon Beach and who does not — this includes humans, as well as all other natural beings, creatures of air, water, and earth. We inhabit this place together. We depend on each other for optimal well-being. But it seems that we, the humans, get to make the decisions. So, we best make good ones.

In our work as Global Impact Engineers for the World Forum Foundation, Roger and I have come to understand that nothing happens without possibly unforeseen, and often unknowable impact on life in other places in the world. The butterfly effect. What you decide about this particular wetlands will influence not only all of us here and what happens in Cannon Beach, but it will have a far-reaching impact, both in time and place.

In our global work for young children, we often refer to the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child.” In this reference we are talking about all the people who are critical to the healthy growth and development of each child—we are talking about the people. The other day, reading about planning for Cannon Beach, I thought about this proverb in a new context. When we say “village,” what are we talking about? I think it’s a mistake to think that the buildings and parking make the village. The village is the people and the decisions we make about the environment in our trust—the decisions that speak to what we value, the decisions that define our character.

One of my favorite mystery authors is Louise Penny who has created a village near Montreal, named Three Pines. The three trees are the landmark to this idyllic place where people sit on a bench beneath the pines to think and to observe, to find peace and joy. It is the people who are the village, the way they are with each other, how they make decisions about what happens in their precious place. Their physical village reflects their character as a community.

Three Pines is fictional, but our village is real. And the decisions we make will reflect our character as a community entrusted with the protection of one of the most beautiful places on earth. Once we decide that a rabbit, an elk, a tree is in our way and must be removed, what are we changing forever? Once an old growth tree is gone, it can never be replaced. A wetlands that becomes a neighborhood will be gone forever. Old growth trees cannot be replanted. Wetlands cannot be moved. Let’s consider whether there is another way or place to satisfy our human needs and respect the nature that was here before us all.

Please consider all that is at stake as you decide. It’s often challenging to think of all the far-reaching effects embedded in one decision, but please do your best. Our village has many voices, with diverse perspectives—and somewhere in all of these voices coming together, there

is the path to choices that will preserve and protect the true character of all the beings of Cannon Beach.