

HUMAN ECOLOGY FORUM

**Biosensitivity - how does this help
Transform Cultures**

DESIRED OUTCOMES

To seek views on the application of a *biosensitive approach* in transforming cultures beyond our current ecologically unsustainable culture

- What is a Biosensitive Approach?
- Added value of a biosensitive approach?
- Can it help in making progress?

SETTING THE SCENE

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Setting the Scene

- Massive growth in population and intensification of resources and energy use are ecologically unsustainable
- Collapse of civilisation inevitable if present patterns of human activity continue unabated
- Human society is operating without a clear understanding of our impact / limits of ecosystems we rely on
- Major disparities in health and conditions of life across different socio-economic groups
- Ongoing survival of all humans and planet will require
 - Recognition of interconnectedness of humans and nature – A *Biosensitive Approach*
 - Radical changes in the thinking and priorities of dominant cultures - A *Cultural Transformation*
 - Elimination of social inequity and injustice

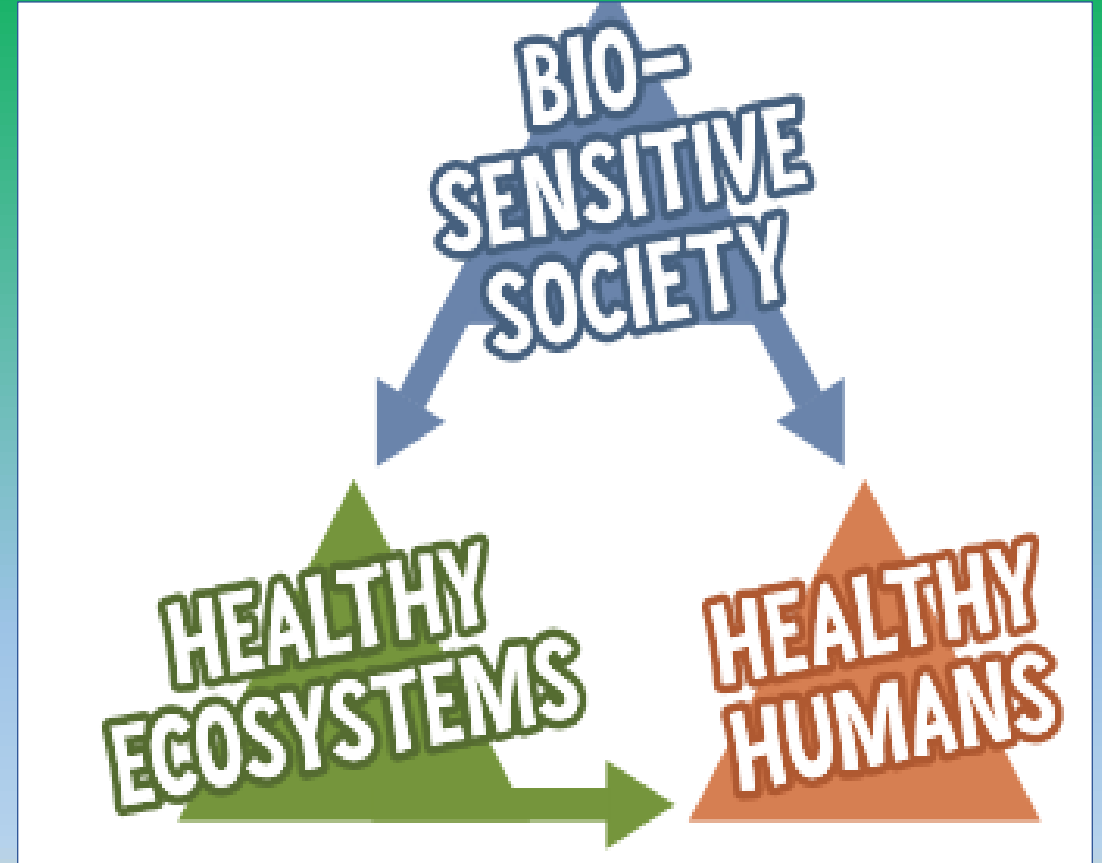
New Economic, Institutional and Cultural Systems/Ways of Working

- Satisfy health needs of all humans
- Reduce consumption of natural resources
- Deliver equity in human health and life quality
- Protect biodiversity on land and in oceans
- Protect biological integrity and nutrient level of soils
- Increase local food production
- Minimise release of pollutants
- Eliminate weapons of mass destruction
- Generate aware and participating citizens
- Generate decisions/actions where biosensitive approach is innate

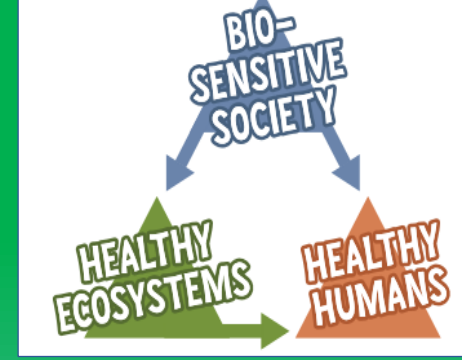
Preconditions to Change

- Clear and shared vision of desired direction / goal
- Vision which captivates and motivates
- Shared by a large fraction of the community
- Active participatory democracy
- Mechanisms to lead us to ecological, economic and social transformation

BIOSENSITIVE APPROACH



Biosensitivity



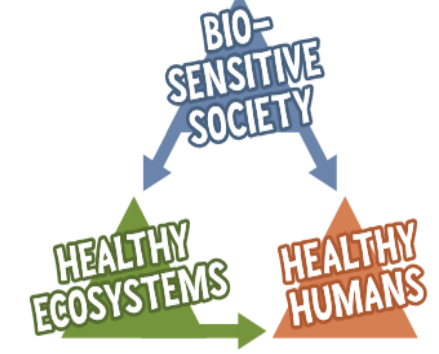
- Goes beyond individual actions (choosing renewables over fossils; protecting wildlife; permaculture; gay marriage; etc.)
- Acts as an integral guide of human behaviour at a societal as well as individual level
- Every decision is made intuitively using these principles
- Places equal emphasis on human health – including social and economic health and equity, and ecosystem health

“a set of attitudes and values that frames human actions within an understanding of the human place in nature so we act in tune with and truly respectful of the processes of life which underpin our existence, and promote health in the ecosystems of the biosphere and all sections of the human community. The outcome of a biosensitive approach is social and ecological sustainability”.

A set of values and attitudes that will lead humans to a healthy life by for themselves and for the earth we live on, to a future for life where healthy people on a healthy planet is a reality.

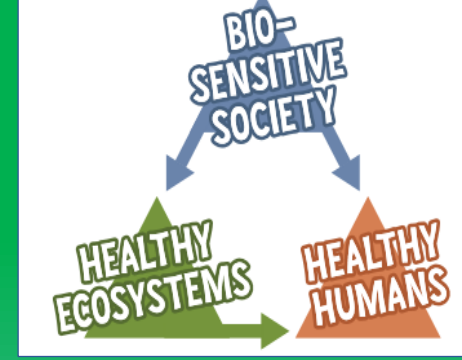
Understanding and acceptance of the fact that all bio-organisms, including humans, are dependent on their nurturing environments, without which their wellbeing is critically endangered.

To be sensitive to the biological processes of life, and to understand that all life on Earth, including human society, depends on the health of these biological processes.



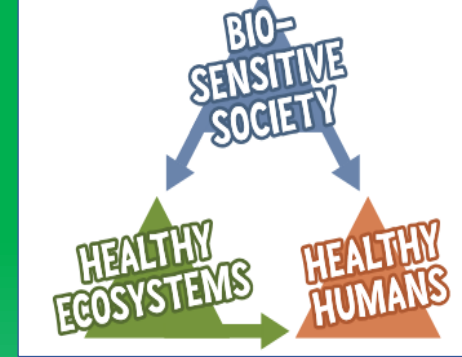
Is there /what is the added value of a biosensitive approach?

Sustainability



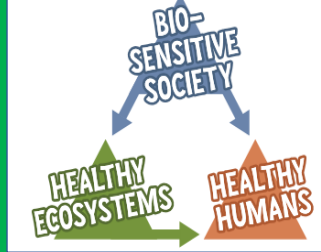
- Sustainability is ‘human-focused’ – what humans need
 - Maintenance of a system within the means of our natural systems and without hurting other people
 - To live without jeopardising potential of people in the future to meet their needs
- ‘Sustainable Development’ – assumes some ongoing growth
- ‘Save Nature’, ‘Protect the environment’, ‘ecosystem services’? – reinforces separation between humans and ecological processes

Beyond Sustainability



- We need a way of looking at the world as well as a way of living in it
- Equal emphasis on health of environment as on health of humans
- Embraces a profound respect for life processes on which we depend as on
- Founded in deep acceptance that people, and human society in all its complexity, are integral part of the environment
- Embraces the connection between healthy humans and healthy plants, animals and ecological processes
- Aims to provide prosperity within the Earth's biophysical constraints, in a fair and equity way, to humans, other species and other generations

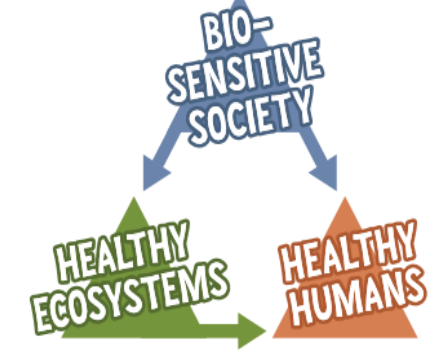
Too Complex?



- Belief in capacity of humans to resolve problems and to create new possibilities for change
- Need to activate qualities that define humanity – capacity for empathy, compassion, collaboration, creativity, enthusiasm etc.*

* Drawn from Andres Edwards, Thriving beyond Sustainability: Pathways to a Resilient Society. New Society Publishers, 2010.

Many Great Existing Initiatives



- Not breaking through – current economic paradigm of ever-increasing consumption persists
- Prevailing cultural understanding does not accept/understand interconnectedness of human health with nature/planetary health
- Prevailing view is that sustainability / integration of nature is ‘impractical’
- Generally involve/engage very small section of community
- Many focus on single species/issues