

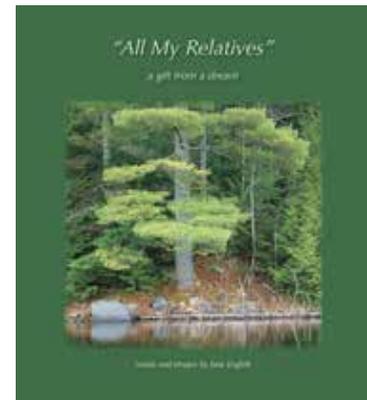
# Introduction

## ***Ancestors, relatives, and making this book —***

While most of my own ancestors came to this continent, to what we now call New England, almost 400 years ago, Abenaki people and their ancestors have been here for thousands of years. Along with the humans who walked here, the *koak*, the white pines, have long been part of this living land. It is said that, as with most indigenous cultures of the world, the Abenaki experienced the trees, rocks, sky, rivers, humans, and animals all as a community of living relatives, relatives who were respected and related with, not as resources to be “used.”

Like many children who spend a lot of time out in nature during early childhood, I had as a child an intuitive sense of being at home with “all my relatives.” But since that was not talked about or acknowledged in the conventional world where I lived, that knowing faded as I grew older, though a resonance of it did stay alive in me through my many years of photographing nature. I appreciate how it has been strengthened more recently through my friendships with Indigenous People.

While beginning to learn the Western Abenaki language in 2021, I received the gift of a dream in which I truly experienced that wonderful sense of being at home in just such a community of relatives of many kinds. The Abenaki consider dreams to be living beings, not inert things, and this dream is indeed alive for me. Having been taught the importance of bringing such a dream to life in the waking world, I made an illustrated booklet about the dream (see p.210). For the booklet’s cover I chose one of my favorite photos, one of a White Pine. I soon understood this choice—White Pine is one of the relatives I had met in the dream, one with whom I have had a life-long relationship.



Being a maker of books, I soon began to celebrate that relationship by creating this book, a book that is a “deep dive” into the world of one of our relatives and of how we interact with this relative. My hope is that this book will facilitate your more fully experiencing our many other-than-human relatives as the community of living relatives that they truly are.

When I awoke from the dream I had been saying the word “wajokami” which is Abenaki for “help me.” I have invited friends to help by writing their own White Pine stories for this book.

White Pine is our co-author; we share the profit from book sales with organizations, including Abenaki tribal groups, that support our relative, White Pine.

For me, the most enduring effect of the dream experience of being embedded in community with “All My Relatives” is a lively sense of satisfaction, of not needing “more,” and, in spite of not being very wealthy in the conventional sense, of delight in having enough.

How different our world would be if more people lived in such a sense of plenty, of satisfaction. We would not be destroying our natural world, not so often fighting with each other over “scarce resources.”

I am reminded of a line from *Tao Te Ching*, an ancient Chinese classic that has been a big part of my life for well over fifty years:

*Those who know that enough is enough will always have enough.*

—Chapter Forty-Six, *Tao Te Ching*. (Gia-fu Feng and Jane English, Vintage Books 1972)

It is my intention that through words and images, the people and the white pines in this book can inspire you to become more aware of and dynamically satisfied with your own living experience in the community of all our relatives—plants, animals, rocks, humans, water, wind, and sky.

Then we can live in a balanced way—experiencing an ancient sense of connectedness at the same time as enjoying the best of what science and technology has brought us—like the camera, the computer and the internet that have been essential to the making of this book.

