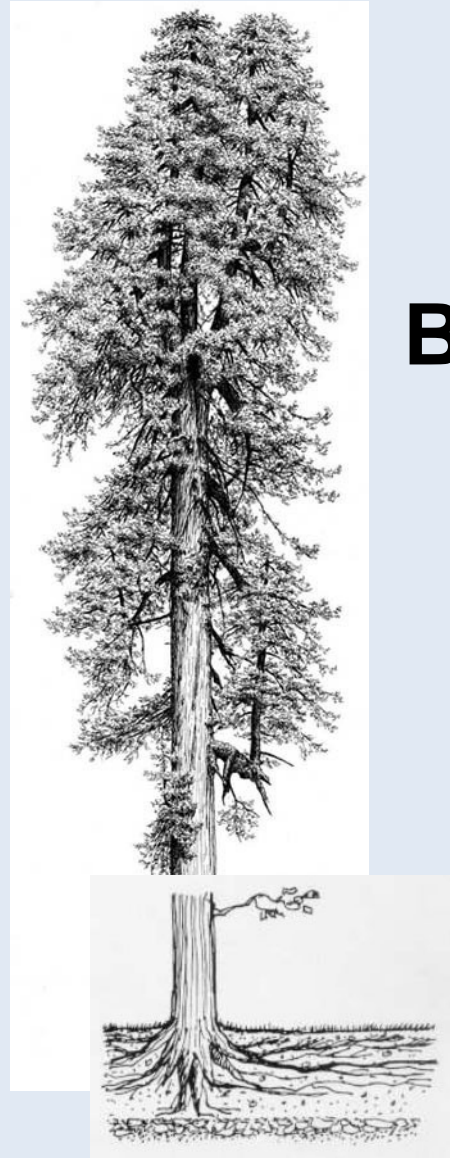


A Brief History of Baha'i Community Involvement in Environmental Issues

Peter Adriance
15th IEF Conference
Hobart, Tasmania
December 10, 2011



Tree as Metaphor

THREE PERIODS

UPPER CANOPY

*(Contemporary
Period 2010 on)*

TRUNK AND LOWER BRANCHES

*(Middle Period
1970's to about
2010)*

ROOTS

*(Early Period - Late
1800s to about 1970)*




*'Core Activities' enable Institutions,
communities, individuals to
increasingly engage in discourses
& social action*

*International Institutional
involvement; inspires some
action at national and local
levels*

*Examples set by lives of Central
Figures & Richard St. Barbe
Baker*

SOIL: The Teachings -- Spiritual Principles inform Action



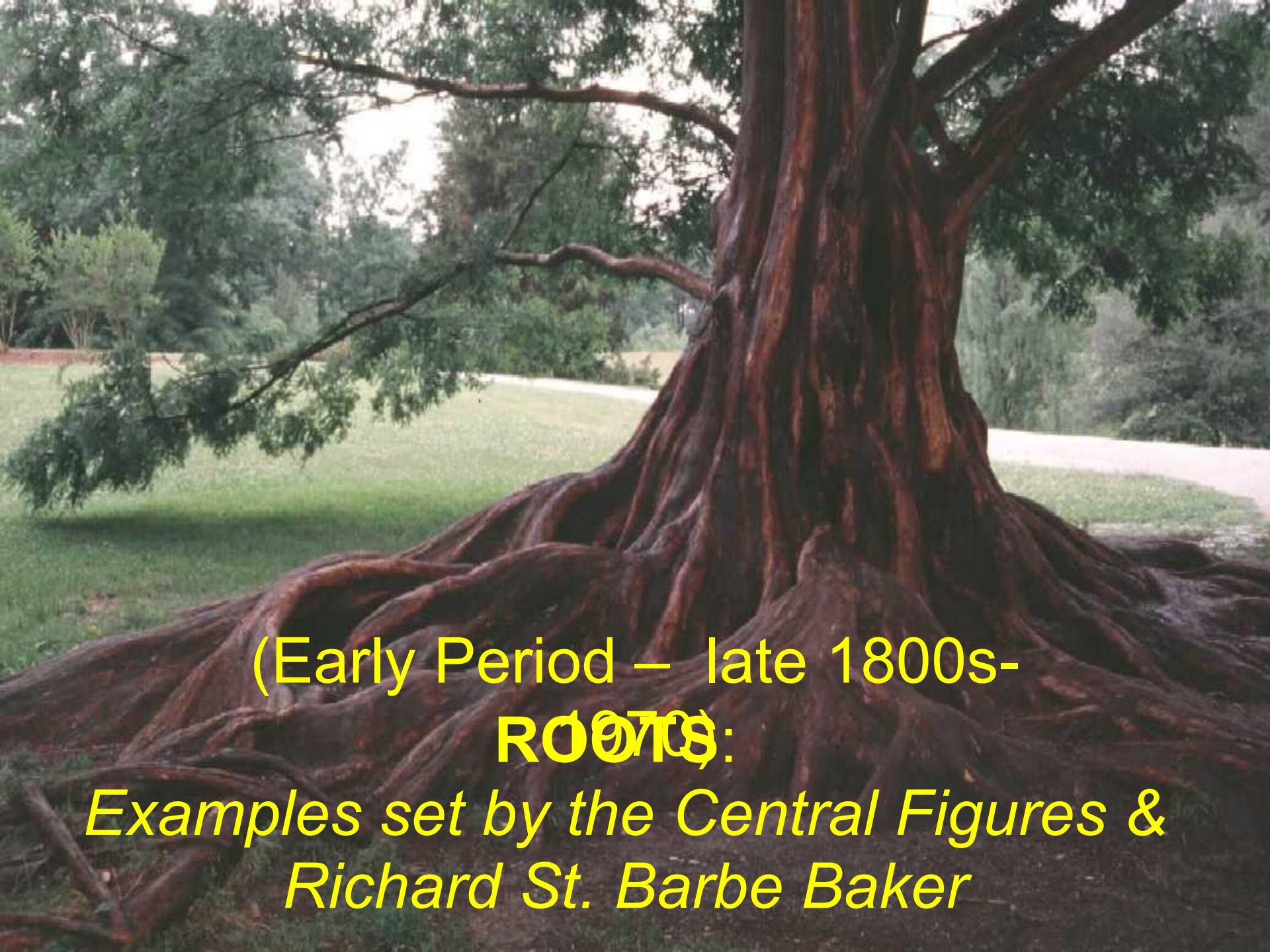
Nature = a reflection of the Divine & should be cherished, respected

3 principles of “particular Importance”

All things are interconnected and flourish according to law of reciprocity

The oneness of humanity is the fundamental spiritual and social truth shaping our age.

SOIL: *The Teachings*
Spiritual Principles inform Action



(Early Period – late 1800s-

ROOTS:

*Examples set by the Central Figures &
Richard St. Barbe Baker*

Baha'u'llah – When asked what would serve Him, called for restoration of the ancient aqueduct to supply water to the people of Acre...



A place to enjoy nature.

The flower pots on the ground mark the location of the bench where Bahá'u'lláh often sat when He visited the garden. The river can be seen in the background.



The Ridvan Garden

In the Ridván Garden. Recent view of the fountain and benches in the Ridván Garden.

“There was no one ... who loved trees and water and the country so much as Baha’u’llah.”

(Abdu’l-Baha quoted by Juliet Thompson)



Abdu'l-Baha relieved famine in 1918, by making available stored wheat and grain



Awarded
“Knight of
the British
Empire”

As Guardian, Shoghi Effendi turned often to the mountains of Switzerland to regain health, energy and self-confidence





Shoghi Effendi designed the beautiful gardens in Bahji and on the slopes of Mt. Carmel...



**...a standard of excellence later emulated
in the terraces and gardens surrounding
the Shrine of the Bab**

Richard St. Barbe Baker social ecologist, formed “Men of the Trees” (1922)



- Renowned for his work with tribesmen to restore soil and reforest the land.
- ‘29 Shoghi Effendi became 1st “lifetime member”
- ‘30s launched “Save the Redwoods” campaign
- ‘45-’70 held “World Forestry Charter Gatherings,” often opening with messages from Shoghi Effendi





**(Middle Period 1970 +)
TRUNK AND LOWER
BRANCHES:**

*International
Institutional
involvement,
inspires some
action at national
and local levels*

Some Baha'i Institutional initiatives

- Since '72 – participated in every major UN Conference on sustainability themes, making diverse contributions (papers, workshops, seminars, preparatory events, arts initiatives, etc.)
- Since '72 – issued multiple statements offering Baha'i perspectives on sustainable development themes
- Since '87 – took part in several major global interfaith initiatives on environment (NRC and ARC)
- '89 – established an Office of the Environment at BIC
- '89, '10 – UHJ letters encouraged engagement on environment.
- '90 published Baha'i compilation, *Conservation of the Earth's Resources*.
- '90 -'00 – contributed to the Earth Charter drafting process
- Since '93 – participated actively in annual meetings of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development

Some Baha'i Climate-related initiatives

Organized or took part in multiple workshops and seminars on “climate ethics”

Issued publications offering Baha'i views on climate change

Published a resource paper on Climate Change ('initial considerations')

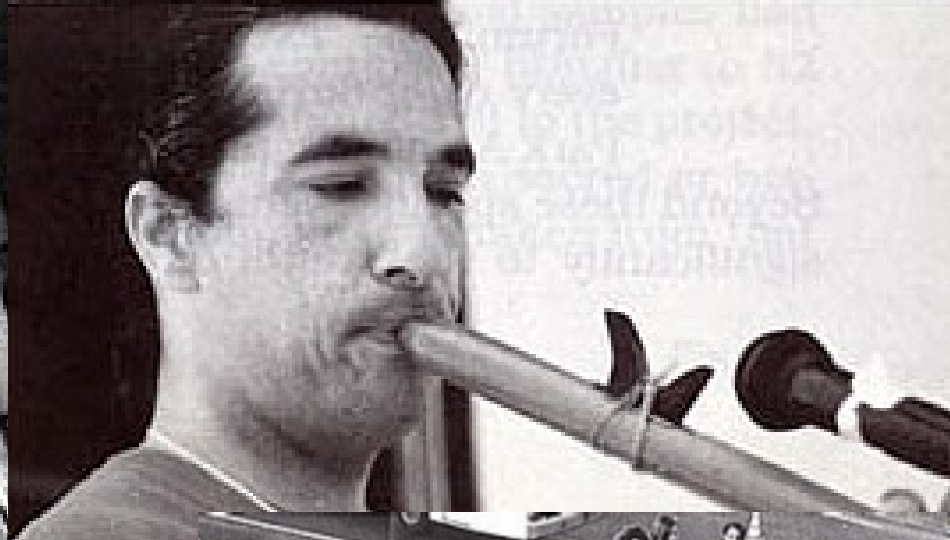
Initiated or signed on to several Interfaith statements and declarations

Made 7 Yr. Plan of commitment to generational change (ARC)

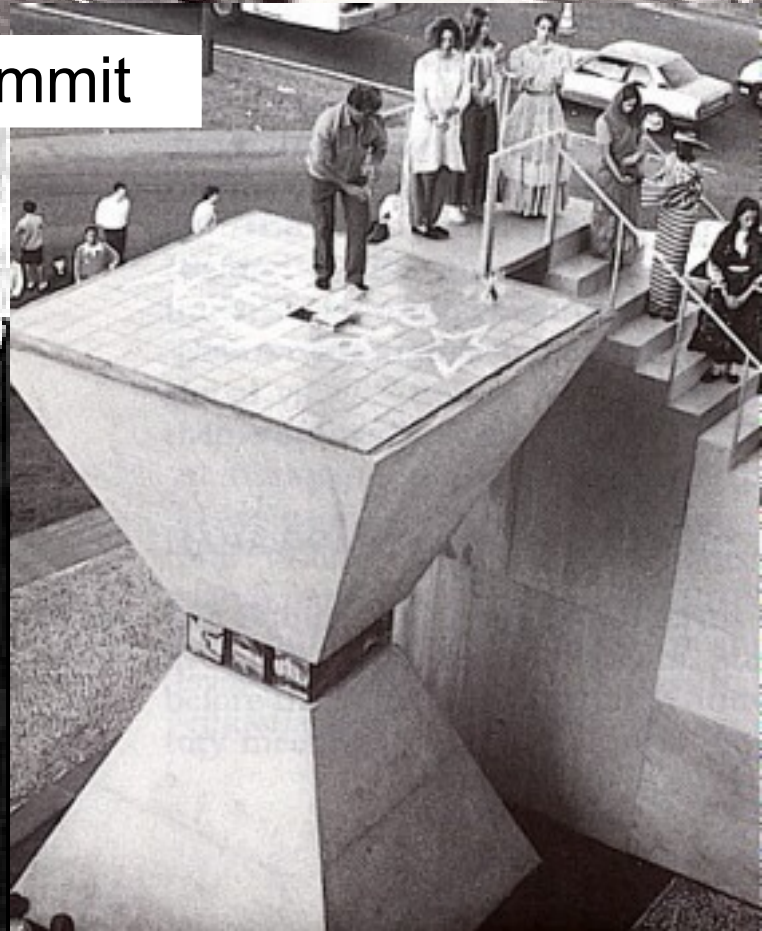
Joined Green Pilgrimage Network (2011)

Greening of operations (BWC, Canada, US, Australia)

NSAs (Canada, US, Australia) sent letters to community encouraging integration of climate theme; some took part in various interfaith-related initiatives on climate ethics



'92 Rio Earth Summit





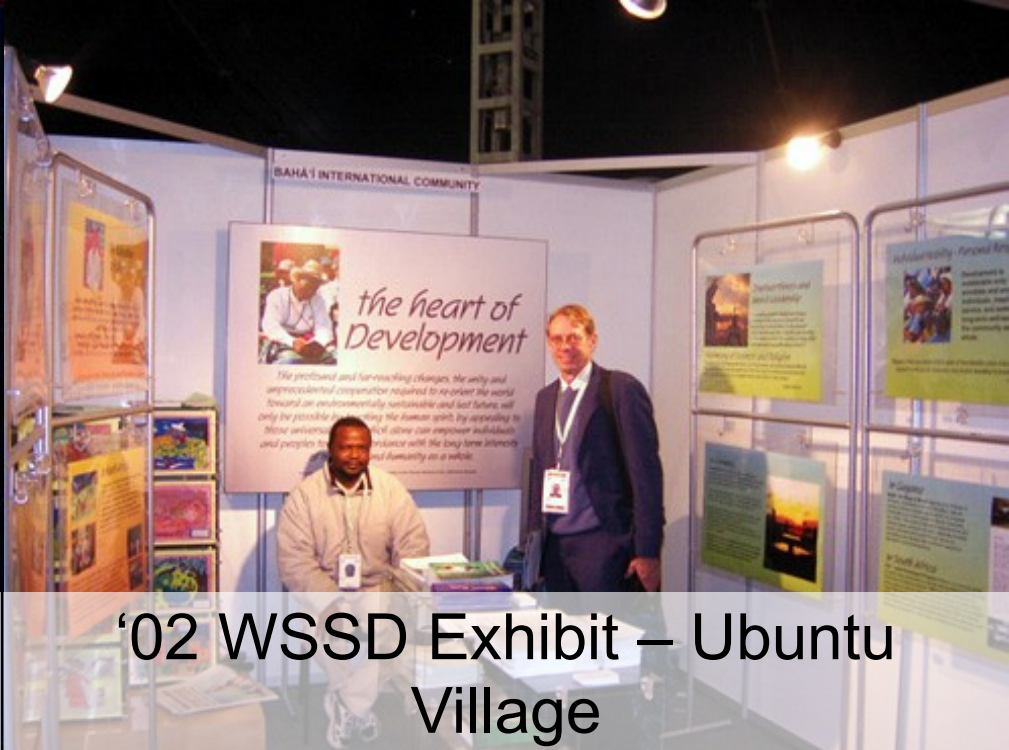
**Formation of
Alliance on
Religion and
Conservation
1995**

**World
religions
pledge
concrete
action on
climate
change
2009**





'97 Rio+5 Earth Charter Drafting Initiative



'02 WSSD Exhibit – Ubuntu Village



'02 A few of many Delegates and Volunteers WSSD



'11 Canadian NSA testimony at Interfaith Climate Ethics Meeting



- Annual conferences
- Newsletter
- Representation and networking at high-level meetings
- Assisting BIC with experts for delegations and contributing to discourses



www.iefworld.org





(Contemporary Period 2010+)
UPPER CANOPY

*Core Activities build capacity of institutions,
communities, & individuals to engage in
discourses & social action*

On Engaging in the Climate Issue...

“The destabilization of the global climate system is in large measure a moral challenge, requiring humanity to develop a greater sense of stewardship and responsibility for the environment, as well as a greater awareness of the interdependence and oneness of all the earth's inhabitants...

“As you continue your efforts to fulfill the goals of the Five Year Plan, we encourage you to study and reflect on the Bahá'í teachings on the environment and to incorporate greater awareness of the environment in your community life and core activities...

“Far from distracting from the processes of growth underway in our community, attention to environmental practices that respect the earth and foster the oneness of its inhabitants will serve to support and sustain these processes.”

(Letter NSA US to American Baha'i Community 2010)



“Environmental Stewards: Champions of Justice!”
Workshops and Retreats - USA

Ridvan 1989 Message

“...assisting in endeavours to conserve the environment in ways which blend with the rhythm of life of our community must assume more importance in Bahá'í activities.” (UHJ, Ridvan 1989)

Ridvan 2010 Message

“At the level of the cluster, involvement in public discourse can range from an act as simple as introducing Bahá'í ideas into everyday conversation to more formal activities such as the preparation of articles and attendance at gatherings, dedicated to themes of social concern—**climate change and the environment**, governance and human rights, to mention a few.”

A Short History of the Involvement of the Baha'i Community on Environmental Issues

Peter Adriance

Major Conclusions:

1. The Baha'i Sacred Scriptures provide the foundation, inspiration and guidance to address contemporary environmental issues.
2. Before 1970: Environmental appreciation and concern was reflected in lives of the Central Figures and Richard St. Barbe Baker, "Man of the Trees".
3. Since 1970: The Baha'i International Community's engagement in key international environmental discourses often serves as a stimulus for national, local and individual actions.
4. 2010 on: As the 'core activities' build capacity and community, Baha'is increasingly reflect environmental awareness, and engage with others in relevant discourses and social action.