



A Blessing of the Land at The Cedars

Welcome to The Cedars – on a blue and green planet called Earth, in the intriguing vision of a country called Canada, on the traditional Indigenous territories of the Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabeg and Mississaugas of Scugog Island.

Over the last 2.5 million years, the geological cycles on planet Earth have included multiple glaciations of almost all of Canada. 20,000 years ago, this land, where we now stand, was covered by ice 2 km thick. 12,000 years ago, the retreating ice created much of the surface geology of what we see around us – hills and scoured valleys, moraines, eskers and glacial till. And over time, life returned... plants, animals, birds, fish... and eventually, the first humans.

As forests covered the land, the Eastern White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*, dominated in areas that might be considered “stressful” – rocky hills, plains with little or no soil cover, and low, swampy areas. Trust a Cedar to find a small amount of soil in the cracks of a massive rock and grow into a thriving bush or tree. Given a chance, Cedars grow strong and tall and beautifully symmetrical. They are a slow-growing, long lasting tree; a typical White Cedar will live 200 years, but

some have been found that exceed 700 years. It has been called a “tree of life” because it provides shelter and food to deer, small mammals and birds.

Forests of Eastern White Cedar greeted the first humans, who also valued its properties. It is resistant to decay and has a wonderfully distinctive aroma. First Nations Ojibway people and early explorers and later settlers all used the bark and the wood of the Cedar to make many useful items.

You are the newest arrivals to this land and to this place, The Cedars. May the lessons of the Cedar be helpful to you. On this land you will witness and experience the interconnectedness of life: earth, water, air, plants, animals and you and all who visit with you here. Be aware of the secrets that this land holds; appreciate and respect the land on which you stand as you care for it.

May you always be in the right place, at the right time, with the right people, doing the right thing.

*Joan Masterton
Presbyterian Minister and Climate Scientist*