

Tiger

By Clive Doucet

*Tiger! Tiger! Burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry!*

— William Blake (1757-1827)

GOD MUST LOVE DIVERSITY FOR EVERYWHERE YOU SEE IT. How many kinds of cats are there? Tiger, lions, snow leopards, black panthers, African wildcats, Canadian lynx and yet they are all cats, they share much. That is the confusion the creator has sown, the creative force clearly loves diversity, but at the same time, every creature, every structure from galaxies to single cells are more alike than they are different.

It is as if the pulse of the universe is not that different from the pulse of the human heart constantly beating out an expansion followed by the beat of contraction, all that differs is the scale and the time line. One is eternal, the other a fragile moment.

For anyone who bothers to think about it, the differences between us human beings, the colour of our hair, our skin, our various sizes, are so trivial that only another human being would bother to notice it. The trouble is, we do. The very first thing that people notice about someone is the colour of their skin. It comes before gender or profession or force of character.

Quakers often profess because such details don't matter to God, then it shouldn't matter to people — there is that of God in all of us. I hold to this also, but it's amazing how many Quakers think and act as if all the harmonious life needs is God's perspective. It doesn't work that way.

Part of my childhood was spent in St. John's, Newfoundland. At that time, it wasn't colour or language. We all looked and sounded pretty much the

same. It was religion. If you were Catholic, you went to one school, one hospital, played on one hockey team, went to one church and, if you were Protestant, another.

There was a line through the community that was invisible to God, but Newfoundlanders sure knew it was there. It was the Catholic-Protestant line. I've spent a life-time seeing how easily diversity or differences, religion, colour, wealth, history can create richness but also very dangerous fissures between human beings. And God, as far as I know, can't overcome these fissures, at least not in the short term. Only people can.

**the creative force
clearly loves diversity,
but at the same time,
every creature,
every structure
from galaxies
to single cells
are more alike than
they are different.**

They can by building neighbourhoods, cities and nations that are inclusive. Inclusive places allow for all people to participate in society. It doesn't isolate people. Isolation is an automatic result of differences, because differences always separate people. The greater the differences, the greater the isolation. We don't get to draw on the richness that diversity can bring unless we create environments that are inclusive, that bring people together. This means

investing in public schools and recreation possibilities open to all, regardless of wealth. It means public transit that is accessible and useful for the old, the young and the poor because at the end of the day, public transit that works is about a lot more than just moving people. It's about social justice, sustainability, inclusive cities; just as libraries are about more than reading; hospitals about more than health; parks about more than play.

God loves diversity but it is up to people to make sure that it plays a creative role in our cities and not a destructive one, and you do that through politics and inclusive services as much as respectful thoughts. 🐅

Clive Doucet, a poet and city councillor in Ottawa, is a member of Ottawa Monthly Meeting.