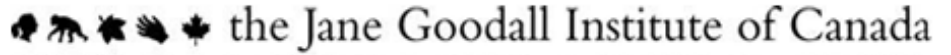


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HOW THE JANE GOODALL INSTITUTE EMBODIES THE ART OF AIKIDO

January 16, 2014 · by Jonathan Silver · in community centred conservation, Uncategorized

What I love about the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI) is that their actions embody the principles of Aikido.

'Aikido' is a form of martial arts where the defender doesn't block her opponent's attack; instead, she redirects the attack away from herself. By redirecting the trajectory of the opponent's attack, one uses a lot less energy than if they were to try and overpower or block their opponent. That is because it takes a lot more energy to stop an object's momentum and send it in another direction than it takes to shift the trajectory of that object's momentum. Briefly, Aikido teaches us to make the most of whatever momentum or energy is already present.



Aikido is often translated as "The Way of Unifying (with) Life Energy" or as "The Way of Harmonious Spirit."

Aikido isn't only a form of combat; it's a way to solve problems. When confronted with a problem, we are taught to be aware of the forces that are present and not to try and stop those forces but rather to channel those forces towards a solution.

JGI embodies the principles of Aikido as a problem solving method.

Jane Goodall says that when arriving in African communities,

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the Institute doesn't try to impose conservation plans because "if we were to attempt to impose a plan, we would no doubt face great resistance [... So] when we visit a new community, the very first thing we do is to ask, 'What is your greatest need?' Sometimes it is a health issue, or food security, or lack of education. Whatever it is, we respond to that" [1].

By asking a community what they need ([here's a great example](#)), JGI taps into the already-present energy of the community. Then JGI adjusts the direction of this momentum using research and technology to develop a successful and sustainable strategy.

A good example of this is the TACARE program, where JGI harnesses the power of farmers' desires for more productive yields (which has, contrary to their intentions, led the farmers to unsustainable farming practices that no longer offer high yields) encouraging them to channel their energies into sustainable and thus more fruitful farming practices (check out [this video](#)).

Notice that instead of forcing a pre-determined program onto a community, JGI develops a conservation program that heeds to a community's needs. Working *with* instead of *against* a community makes that community more willing to act in partnership with JGI.

We live in an age where resources are becoming ever scarcer so reducing our energy consumption is top priority. Because Aikido teaches us to act using as little energy as possible, sustainability is one of its core virtues. For that reason, the principle of Aikido is an essential tool for solving problems in our age. Aikido is a way towards a sustainable future—JGI is a way towards a more sustainable future.

[1] Goodall, Jane. Interview. *Jane Goodall on Why We Should Help the Serengeti* by Andrew Keegan. *National Geographic*. 4 Aug. 2013.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/08/130804-serengeti-africa-jane-goodall-animals-environment/>

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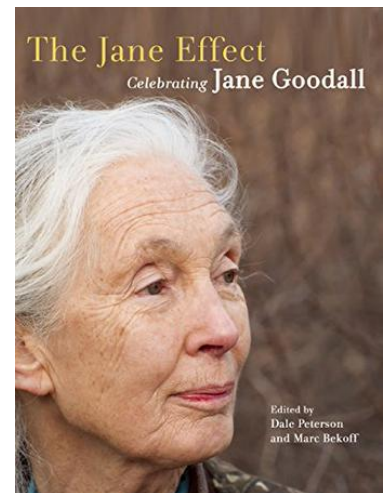


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