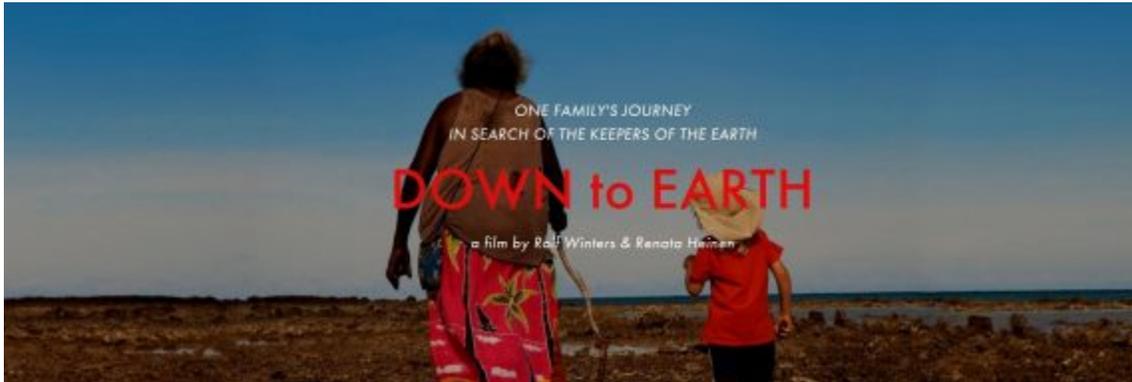


The writing is on the wall.... on all walls!



By Rolf Winters, director of the film 'Down to Earth'

Collectively we are responsible to prepare our children for their future. But what is that future we are preparing them for? I believe it is fair to say that never before has this question been more difficult to answer. Yet, it also has never been more important!

In their lifetime, the young people of today will already be seriously confronted with the consequences of our modern world and the lifestyle that we and previous generations have developed. We do not have the luxury to just wait to see how things pan out. The writing is on the wall.... on all walls!

We didn't inherit the Earth from our parents, we borrow it from our children. (Chief Seattle)

The clock is ticking.... collectively, we have created an ecological time bomb and we cannot continue to pretend that it is not in our hands. Even though our lives do not seem to be under direct threat, the livelihood on Earth is at stake. The problem is that we do not feel the impact of our lifestyle, do not see the size of our footprint on this Earth. Yet, humanity is at a crossroads and we are forced to make up our minds, now! A lot of the damage has already been done and some of the deterioration processes of our ecosystems and climate have gone past critical points, but it is not too late to come to the insight that it is time to mend our ways. It starts with a change in the way we look at the world and our place in it: *Who am I in this world today?*

We have to change the lens with which we look at our world and we have to change the questions we ask ourselves as educators. It simply will not do to ask ourselves how we can best prepare our children for a good job, for a good position in society. In fact, this question might be the very reason that nothing has really changed since the early 1970s, when leading scientists proved that our planet cannot sustain our lifestyle and our path of economic 'growth' (*Limits of Growth, 1972*).

How will we ever create the change that is needed if our education is still focused on delivering ready and fit participants for a system that is the actual cause of the big problems we face as humanity? Instead, shouldn't we get serious and really PREPARE our children to become the generation that will turn the tide? The young generation of today might be facing the hardest task any generation has ever faced before.

So the real questions we face are:

How do we empower them to become that generation? How can we develop a generation that knows what our true human potential is? And that it is not measured by GDP or the Wall Street index? How can we guide a generation that is capable of questioning the system, questioning the models of growth and questioning our modern consumption-based lifestyle? Isn't it our biggest responsibility to ensure they don't continue on the same path humanity has been on for too long, that they don't follow the same dead-end road?



These were among our considerations in 2005, when we as a family decided to take our children out of the school system and live off the grid for five years. What evolved from this journey of exploration can be seen in the film DOWN to EARTH, which will be screened at the symposium on Wednesday evening. The film was launched in the Netherlands in October and still has sell-out cinema screenings today. The film has hit a nerve in Dutch society. Apart from record-breaking cinema attendance, we have had hundreds of requests from parents and teachers who would like to use the film in their schools. Therefore, we are now developing school programs, to bring a different awareness and different mindset into the class room.

It is a privilege to have a dialogue with you after the film as we are keen to co-create with change makers in education.