

# Indigenous Americans: Spirituality and Ecos

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The cosmic visions of indigenous peoples are significantly diverse. Each nation and community has its own unique traditions. Still, several characteristics stand out. First, it is common to envision the creative process of the universe as a form of thought or mental process. Second, it is common to have a source of creation that is plural, either because several entities participate in creation or because the process as it unfolds includes many sacred actors stemming from a First Principle (Father/Mother or Grandfather/Grandmother). Third, the agents of creation are seldom pictured as human, but are depicted instead as “wakan” (holy), or animal-like (coyote, raven, great white hare, etc.), or as forces of nature (such as wind/breath). The Lakota medicine man Lame Deer says that the Great Spirit “is not like a human being. . . . He is a power. That power could be in a cup of coffee. The Great Spirit is no old man with a beard.”<sup>1</sup> The concept perhaps resembles the *elohim* of the Jewish Genesis, the plural form of *eloi*, usually mistranslated as “God,” as though it were singular.

Perhaps the most important aspect of indigenous cosmic visions is the conception of creation as a living process, resulting in a living universe in which a kinship exists between all things. Thus the Creators are our family, our Grandparents or Parents, and all of their creations are children who, of necessity, are also our relations.

An ancient Ashiwi (Zuñi) prayer-song states:

That our earth mother may wrap herself  
In a four-fold robe of white meal [snow]; . . .  
When our earth mother is replete with living waters,  
When spring comes,  
The source of our flesh,  
All the different kinds of corn  
We shall lay to rest in the ground with the earth mother’s  
living waters,

They will be made into new beings,  
Coming out standing into the daylight of their Sun father, to  
all sides  
They will stretch out their hands. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Mother Earth is a living being, as are the waters and the Sun.

Juan Matus told Carlos Castaneda that Genaro, a Mazateco, “was just now embracing this enormous earth . . . but the earth knows that Genaro loves it and it bestows on him its care. . . . This earth, this world. For a warrior there can be no greater love. . . . This lovely being, which is alive to its last recesses and understands every feeling. . . .”<sup>3</sup>

Or, as Lane Deer puts it:

We must try to use the pipe for mankind, which is on the road to self-destruction. . . . This can be done only if all of us, Indians and non-Indians alike, can again see ourselves as part of the earth, not as an enemy from the outside who tries to impose its will on it. Because we . . . also know that, being a living part of the earth, we cannot harm any part of her without hurting ourselves.<sup>4</sup>

European writers long ago referred to indigenous Americans’ ways as “animism,” a term that means “life-ism.” And it is true that most or perhaps all Native Americans see the entire universe as being alive—that is, as having movement and an ability to act. But more than that, indigenous Americans tend to see this living world as a fantastic and beautiful creation engendering extremely powerful feelings of gratitude and indebtedness, obliging us to behave as if we are related to one another. An overriding characteristic of Native North American religion is that of gratitude, a feeling of overwhelming love and thankfulness for the gifts of the Creator and the earth/universe. As a Cahuilla elder, Ruby Modesto, has stated: “Thank you mother earth, for holding me on your breast. You always love me no matter how old I get.”<sup>5</sup> Or as Joshua Wetsit, an Assiniboiné elder born in 1886, put it: “But our Indian religion is all one religion, the Great Spirit. We’re thankful that we’re on this Mother Earth. That’s the first thing when we wake up in the morning, is to be thankful to the Great Spirit for the Mother Earth: how we live, what it produces, what keeps everything alive.”<sup>6</sup>

Many years ago, the Great Spirit gave the Shawnee, Sauk, Fox, and other peoples maize or corn. This gift arrived when a beautiful woman appeared from the sky. She was fed by two hunters, and in return she gave them, after one year, maize, beans, and tobacco. “We thank the Great Spirit for all the benefits he has conferred upon us. For myself, I never take a drink of water from a spring, without being mindful of his goodness.”<sup>7</sup>

Although it is certainly true that Native Americans ask for help from spiritual beings, it is my personal observation that giving thanks, or, in some cases, giving payment for gifts received, is a salient characteristic of most public ceremonies. Perhaps this is related to the

overwhelmingly positive attitude Native Americans have had toward the Creator and the world of “nature,” or what I call the “Wemi Tali,” the “All Where” in the Delaware-Lenápe language. Slow Buffalo, a teacher, is remembered to have said about a thousand years ago:

Remember . . . the ones you are going to depend upon. Up in the heavens, the Mysterious One, that is your grandfather. In between the earth and the heavens, that is your father. This earth is your grandmother. The dirt is your grandmother. Whatever grows in the earth is your mother. It is just like a sucking baby on a mother. . . .

Always remember, your grandmother is underneath your feet always. You are always on her, and your father is above.<sup>8</sup>

Winona LaDuke, a contemporary leader from White Earth Anishinabe land, tells us that:

Native American teachings describe the relations all around—animals, fish, trees, and rocks—as our brothers, sisters, uncles, and grandpas. . . .

These relations are honored in ceremony, song, story, and life that keep relations close—to buffalo, sturgeon, salmon, turtles, bears, wolves, and panthers. These are our older relatives—the ones who came before and taught us how to live.<sup>9</sup>

In 1931 Standing Bear, a Lakota, said when reciting an ancient prayer:

To mother earth, it is said . . . you are the only mother that has shown mercy to your children. . . . Behold me, the four quarters of the earth, relative I am. . . . All over the earth faces of all living things are alike. Mother earth has turned these faces out of the earth with tenderness. Oh Great Spirit behold them, all these faces with children in their hands.<sup>10</sup>

Again in 1931, Black Elk, the well-known Lakota medicine man, told us that “The four-leggeds and the wings of the air and the mother earth were supposed to be relative-like. . . . The first thing an Indian learns is to love each other and that they should be relative-like to the four-leggeds.”<sup>11</sup> And thus we see this very strong kinship relation to the Wemi Tali, the “All Where”: “The Great Spirit made the flowers, the streams, the pines, the cedars—takes care of them. . . . He takes care of me, waters me, feeds me, makes me live with plants and animals as one of them. . . . All of nature is in us, all of us is in nature.”<sup>12</sup>

At the center of all of the creation is the Great Mystery. As Black Elk said:

When we use the water in the sweat lodge we should think of Wakan-Tanka, who is always flowing, giving His power and life to everything. . . . The round fire place at the center of the sweat lodge is the center of the universe, in which dwells Wakan-Tanka, with His power which is the fire. All these things are Wakan [holy and mystery] and must be understood deeply if we really wish to purify ourselves, for the power of a thing or an act is in the meaning and the understanding.<sup>13</sup>

Luther Standing Bear, writing in the 1930s, noted:

The old people came literally to love the soil and they sat or reclined on the ground with a feeling of being close to a mothering power. It was good for the skin to touch the earth and the old people liked to remove their moccasins and walk with bare feet on the sacred earth. . . . The soil was soothing, strengthening, cleansing, and healing. . . . Wherever the Lakota went, he was with Mother Earth. No matter where he roamed by day or slept by night he was safe with her.<sup>14</sup>

Native people, according to Standing Bear, were often baffled by the European tendency to refer to nature as crude, primitive, wild, rude, untamed, and savage. “For the Lakota, mountains, lakes, rivers, springs, valleys, and woods were all finished beauty. . . .”<sup>15</sup>

Of course, the indigenous tendency to view the earth and other nonorganic entities as being part of *bios* (life, living) is seen by many post-1500 Europeans as simply romantic or nonsensical. When Native students enroll in many biology or chemistry classes today they are often confronted by professors who are absolutely certain that rocks are not alive. But in reality these professors are themselves products of an idea system of materialism and mechanism that is both relatively modern and indefensible. I have challenged this materialist perspective in a poem, “Kinship is the Basic Principle of Philosophy,” which I will partially reproduce here as indicative of some common indigenous perspectives:

. . . For hundreds of years  
certainly for thousands

Our Native elders  
have taught us  
“All My Relations”

means all living things  
and the entire Universe  
“All Our Relations”  
they have said  
time and time again. . . .

Do you doubt still?  
a rock alive? You say  
it is hard!  
it doesn't move of its own accord!  
it has no eyes!  
it doesn't think!  
but rocks do move  
put one in a fire

it will get hot won't it?  
That means  
won't you agree?  
that its insides are moving  
ever more rapidly? . . .

So don't kid me my friend,  
rocks change  
rocks move  
rocks flow  
rocks combine  
rocks are powerful friends  
I have many  
big and small  
their processes, at our temperatures,  
are very slow  
but very deep!

I understand because, you see,  
I am part rock!  
I eat rocks  
rocks are part of me  
I couldn't exist without  
the rock in me  
We are all related!

No, it's alive I tell you,  
just like the old ones say  
they've been there  
you know  
they've crossed the boundaries  
not with computers  
but with their  
very own beings!<sup>16</sup>

About a thousand years ago, White Buffalo Calf Woman came to the ancestors of the Lakota, giving them a sacred pipe and a round rock. The rock, Black Elk said,

... is the Earth, your Grandmother and Mother, and it is where you will live and increase. . . . All of this is sacred and so do not forget! Every dawn as it comes is a holy event, and every day is holy, for the light comes from your father Wakan-Tanka; and also you must always remember that the two-leggeds and all the other peoples who stand upon this earth are sacred and should be treated as such.<sup>17</sup>

Here we see not only the expression of relatedness on a living earth, but also the sacredness or holiness of events that some persons take for granted: the dawn, the day, and, in effect, time and the flow of life in its totality. In relation to all of these gifts, human beings are expected to be humble, not arrogant, and to respect other creatures. An ancient Nahua (Mexican) poem tells us that

Those of the white head of hair, those of the wrinkled face,  
our ancestors. . .

They did not come to be arrogant,  
They did not come to go about looking greedily,  
They did not come to be voracious.

They were such that they were esteemed on the earth:  
They reached the stature of eagles and jaguars.<sup>18</sup>

Lame Deer says: "You can tell a good medicine man by his actions and his way of life. Is he lean? Does he live in a poor cabin? Does money leave him cold?"<sup>19</sup> Thus, humility and a lack of arrogance are accompanied by a tendency toward simple living, which reinforces the ideal of nonexploitation of other living creatures. A consciousness of death also adds to the awareness of the importance of concentrating on the ethical quality of one's life as opposed to considerations of quantity of possessions or size of religious edifices. "A man's life is short. Make yours a worthy one," says Lame Deer.

Juan Matus, in Carlos Castaneda's *Journey to Ixtlan*, captures very well the attitude of many Native people: "... You don't eat five quail; you eat one. You don't damage the plants just to make a barbecue. . . . You don't use and squeeze people until they have shriveled to nothing, especially the people you love. . . ." <sup>20</sup> This kind of attitude is found over and over again in the traditions of Native people, from the basketry and food-gathering techniques of Native Californians to the characters in the stories of Anna Lee Walters (as in her novel *Ghostsinger*, the stories in *The Sun is Not Merciful*, or in *Talking Indian*).

Respect and humility are the building blocks of indigenous life-ways, since they not only lead to minimal exploitation of other living creatures but also preclude the arrogance of aggressive missionary activity and secular imperialism, as well as the arrogance of patriarchy.

But Anglo-American "ecologists" often have a very narrow conception of what constitutes "ecology" and the "environment." Does this contrast with the Native American attitude? Let us examine some definitions first. The root of the concept of environment has to do with

“rounding” or “that which arounds [surrounds] us.” It is similar to Latin *vicinitat* (Spanish *vecinidad* or English *vicinity*), referring to that which neighbors something, and also to Greek *oikos* (ecos), a house and, by extension, a habitation (Latin dwelling) or area of inhabiting (as in *oikoumene*, the inhabited or dwelled-in world). Ecology is the *logie* or study of ecos, the study of inhabiting/dwelling, or, as defined in one dictionary, the study of “organisms and their environment.”

Ecos (*oikos*) is “the house we live in, our place of habitation.” But where do we live and who are we? Certainly we can define ecos in a narrow sense, as our immediate vicinity, or we can broaden it to include the Sun (which is, of course, the driving power or energy source in everything that we do), the Moon, and the entire known universe (including the Great Creative Power, or *Ketanitowit* in Lenápe). Our ecos, from the indigenous point of view, extends out to the very boundaries of the great totality of existence, the Wemi Tali.

Similarly, our environment must include the sacred source of creation as well as such things as the light of the Sun, on which all life processes depend. Thus our surroundings include the space of the universe and the solar/stellar bodies that have inspired so much of our human yearnings and dreams.

Ecology, then, in my interpretation, must be the holistic (and interdisciplinary) study of the entire universe, the dynamic relationship of its various parts. And since, from the indigenous perspective, the universe is alive, it follows that we could speak of geo-ecology as well as human ecology, the ecology of oxygen as well as the ecology of water.

Many indigenous thinkers have considered humans part of the Wemi Tali, not separate from it. As I have written:

For us, truly, there are no “surroundings.”

I can lose my hands and still live. I can lose my legs and still live. I can lose my eyes and still live. . . . But if I lose the air I die. If I lose the sun I die. If I lose the earth I die. If I lose the water I die. If I lose the plants and animals I die. All of these things are more a part of me, more essential to my every breath, than is my so-called body. What is my real body?

We are not autonomous, self-sufficient beings as European mythology teaches. . . . We are rooted just like the trees. But our roots come out of our nose and mouth, like an umbilical cord, forever connected with the rest of the world. . . .

Nothing that we do, do we do by ourselves. We do not see by ourselves. We do not hear by ourselves. . . . We do not think, dream, invent, or procreate by ourselves. We do not die by ourselves. . . .

I am a point of awareness, a circle of consciousness, in the midst of a series of circles. One circle is that which we call “the body.” It is a universe itself, full of millions of little living creatures living their own “separate” but dependent lives. . . . But all of these “circles” are not really separate—they are all mutually dependent upon each other. . . .<sup>21</sup>

We, in fact, have no single edge or boundary, but are rather part of a continuum that extends outward from our center of consciousness, both in a perceptual (epistemological-existential) and in a biophysical sense—our brain centers must have oxygen, water, blood with all of its elements, minerals, etc., in order to exist, but also, of course, must connect to the cosmos as a whole. Thus our own personal bodies form part of the universe *directly*, while these same bodies are miniature universes in which, as noted, millions of living creatures subsist, operate, fight, reproduce, and die.

Anna Lee Walters, the Otoe-Pawnee teacher and writer, in speaking of prayers, notes:

“Waconda,” it says in the Otoe language, Great Mystery, meaning that vital thing or phenomenon in life that cannot ever be entirely comprehensible to us. What is understood though, through the spoken word, is that silence is also Waconda, as is the universe and everything that exists, tangible and intangible, because none of these things are separate from that life force. It is all Waconda. . . .<sup>22</sup>

Thus ecos for us must include that which our consciousness inhabits, the house of our soul, our *ntchítchank* or *lenapeyókan*, and must not be limited to a dualistic or mechanistic-materialistic view of bios. Ecology must be shorn of its Eurocentric (or, better, reductionist and materialist) perspective and broadened to include the *realistic* study of how living centers of awareness interact with all of their surroundings.

At a practical level this is very important, because one cannot bring about significant changes in the way in which the Wemi Tali is being abused without considering the values, economic systems, ethics, aspirations, and spiritual beliefs of human groups. For example, the *sense of entitlement* felt by certain social groups or classes, the idea of being *entitled* to exploit resources found in the lands of other groups or *entitled* to exploit “space” without any process of review or permission or approval from all concerned—this sense of superiority and restless acquisitiveness must be confronted by ecology.

The beauty of our night sky, for example, now threatened by hundreds or thousands of potential future satellites and space platforms, by proposed nuclear-powered expeditions to Mars and space-based nuclear weapons, cannot be protected merely by studying the physical relations of organisms with the sky. The cultures of all concerned have to be part of the equation, and within these cultures questions of beauty, ethics, and sacredness must play a role. Sadly, the U.S. government is the greatest offender in the threat to space.



When a mountain is to be pulled down to produce cement, or coal, or cinderstone, or to provide housing for expanding suburbanites, the questions that must be asked are not only those relating to stream-flow, future mudslides, fire danger, loss of animal habitat, air pollution, or damage to stream water quality. Of paramount importance are also questions of beauty, ownership, and the unequal allocation of wealth and power that allows rich investors to make decisions affecting large numbers of creatures based only upon narrow self-interest. Still more difficult are questions relating to the sacredness of Mother Earth and of the rights of mountains to exist without being mutilated. When do humans have the right to mutilate a mountain? Are there procedures that might mitigate such an aggression? Are there processes that might require that the mountain's right to exist in beauty be weighed against the money-making desires of a human or human group?

We hear a great deal about “impacts” and how “impacts” must be weighed and/or mitigated. But all too often, these considerations do not include aesthetics (unless the destruction is proposed for an area where rich and powerful people live), and very seldom do we hear about *sacredness* or the rights of the earth. Indeed, we have made progress in the United States with the concept of protecting endangered species, but it is interesting that, for many people, the point of such protection is essentially pragmatic: we are willing to preserve genetic diversity (especially as regards plant life) in order to meet potential human needs. The intrinsic right of different forms of life each to have space and freedom is seldom evoked. (Even homeless humans have no recognized right to “space” in the United States).<sup>23</sup>

All over the Americas, from Chile to the arctic, Native Americans are engaged in battles with aggressive corporations and governments that claim the right to set aside small areas (reserves) for Native people and then to seize the rest of the Native territory and throw it open to Occidental Petroleum, Texaco, or other profit-seeking organizations. Often, as in the case of the U'wa people, the concept of the sacredness of the living earth directly conflicts with the interests of big corporations and the revenue-hungry neocolonial governments that support them.

It has to be said that some indigenous governments and groups have also allowed devastating projects to be developed on their territories. Sometimes there has been grassroots resistance to the extraction of coal, uranium, and other minerals, but very often the non-Native government has encouraged (or strong-armed) the indigenous peoples into agreeing to a contract providing for little or no protection to the environment.

In her recent book, *All Our Relations*, Winona LaDuke focuses on a number of specific struggles involving Native people in the United States and Canada. She points out that “Grassroots and land-based struggles characterize most of Native environmentalism. We are nations of people with distinct land areas, and our leadership and direction emerge from the land up.”<sup>24</sup> LaDuke shows in each of her chapters how different groups of First Nations people are facing up to serious problems and are seeking to address them at the local, community level. They are also forming national and international organizations that seek to

help individual nations, in great part through the sharing of information and technical assistance. In the final analysis, however, each nation, reserve, or community has to confront its own issues and develop its own responsible leadership. This must be stressed again and again: each sovereign Native nation will deal with its own environmental issues in its own way. There is no single Native American government that can develop a common indigenous response to the crisis we all face.

Mention should be made here of the work of Debra Harry, a Northern Paiute activist from the Pyramid Lake Reservation who is spearheading an information campaign relative to biopiracy and the dangers of the Human Genome Diversity Project. The collection of Native American tissue samples and DNA/mtDNA information represents a very serious environmental threat, since the discovery of unique genetic material could be used not only for patenting and sale but also for future campaigns of germ or biological warfare. The latter may seem extreme, but Native peoples have reason to be cautious about sharing potentially dangerous information with agencies, governments, and organizations not under their own control. The entire field of biopiracy, the theft of indigenous knowledge about plants and drugs, represents another area of great concern, since Native peoples could find themselves having to pay for the use of their own cultural heritage or for treatment using genetic material of indigenous origin.<sup>25</sup>

Many activists are concerned primarily with the environmental responses of Native Americans belonging to specific land-based communities recognized as sovereign by the U.S. or Canadian governments. But in addition, there are millions of Native people who do not have “tribal” governments that are recognized as legitimate by a state. In California and Mexico, numerous Mixtec communities must deal with the hazards of agricultural pesticide, crop-dusting on top of workers, poor housing, inadequate sanitation, poor or polluted water sources, and a host of other issues. The Mixtec have responded by organizing around farm-labor issues, as well as developing their own ways of coping. For example, in Baja California they are often forced to build their own houses on steep hillsides where they must use old cast-off truck and auto tires as retaining walls to provide a level area for living.

Many Native groups, including Kickapoos, Navajos, Papagos, Zapotecs, and Chinantecs, produce a number of migrant agricultural laborers. These workers often remain rooted in home villages to which they may return seasonally. Such persons have a primary responsibility to their families; they cannot be expected to devote much energy to environmentalism, apart from attempting to obtain clean water, healthy food, and sanitary living conditions.

On a positive note, the environmental awareness of many indigenous American groups translates into a high respect for women in their communities. It would be hypocritical to seek to control women or restrict their opportunities for full self-realization while pretending to respect living creatures. This is a significant issue, because a great deal of evidence has shown that when women have high status, education, and choices, they tend to enrich a

community greatly and to stabilize population growth. Many traditional American societies have been able to remain in balance with their environments because of the high status of women, a long nursing period for children, and/or the control of reproductive decisions by women.<sup>26</sup> Many of the leaders in the Native struggle today are women.

Many Native homelands are much reduced in size from former years and are often located on land of poor quality. These conditions can create overuse of resources. Human population growth is, of course, one of the fundamental issues of environmental science. Along with the unequal distribution of resources and the taking away of resources (such as the removal of oil from indigenous lands, leaving polluted streams and poisoned soil) from militarily weaker peoples, human population growth is one of the major causes of species loss and damage to ecos. These are major issues in ecology but also must be overriding concerns for economists, political scientists, and political economists. In fact, the tendency in North America to ignore the impact of money-seeking activities upon nonmarket relations is a major source of environmental degradation. The recent effort to “charge” the industrial nations for the damage they have caused to world environments (as a new form of “debt” from the capitalist world to the rest of the world) is an example of how we must proceed.<sup>27</sup>

To many of the more materialistic peoples of the world, indigenous people have often seemed “backward” or “simple.” They have seemed ripe for conquest or conversion, or both. The fact is, however, that the kind of ethical living characteristic of so many indigenous groups, with its respect for other life forms and its desire for wholeness of intellect, may be the best answer to the problems faced by all peoples today.

Yet there are some who challenge the environmental record of Native Americans, seeking to prove that in spite of the ideals expressed in indigenous spirituality, Native peoples were actually large-scale predators responsible some ten thousand years ago for widespread slaughter and even species annihilation. This viewpoint, shared primarily by a few anthropologists, overlooks the fact that during the Pleistocene era and later extinctions occurred in Eurasia and elsewhere, and that Native Americans cannot be blamed for a global phenomenon. In any case, indigenous Americans have always belonged to numerous independent political and familial units, each with its own set of values and behavioral strategies. One can hardly assign blame to modern Native people as a whole group when the “culprits” (if there were any) cannot even be identified.

In dealing with the sacred traditions of original Americans and their relationship to the environment, we must keep in mind a common-sense fact: not only do different Native groups have different traditions, stories, ceremonies, living conditions, challenges, and values, but each family or group has its own unique approach to “together-living” or “culture.” We must also factor in time, since different days, years, and epochs have presented different circumstances. In short, humans do not live by abstract rule alone. They live as well through a unique set of decisions informed by inspiration, personality, situation, and opportunity.

Native Americans, like any other group, are capable of acts that might well conflict with the major thrust of their sacred traditions. We must, therefore, differentiate between the concrete behavior of a people and their ideals. But in the case of indigenous Americans, such a distinction is perhaps less important than in other traditions. Why? Because Native Americans often lack a single, authoritative book or set of dogmas that tells them what their “ideals” should be. On the contrary, Native American sacred traditions are more the result of choices made over and over again within the parameters of a basic philosophy of life. Thus, we must look at the ideals expressed in sacred texts (including those conveyed orally), but also at the choices that people actually make.

Nonetheless, I believe that we can make the kinds of generalizations that I have, at least as regards those Native North Americans still following traditional values.

. . . The Old Ones say  
outward is inward to the heart  
    and inward is outward to the center  
    because  
for us  
    there are no absolute boundaries  
    no borders  
    no environments  
    no outside  
    no inside  
    no dualisms  
    no single body  
    no non-body

We don't stop at our eyes  
We don't begin at our skin  
We don't end at our smell  
We don't start at our sounds. . . .

Some scientists think  
they can study a world of  
matter separate from themselves  
but there is no  
Universe Un-observed  
(knowable to us at least)  
nothing can be known  
without being channeled  
through some creature's senses,  
the unobserved Universe  
cannot be discussed

for we, the observers,  
being its very description  
are its eyes and ears  
its very making  
is our seeing of it  
    our sensing of it. . . .

    Perhaps we are Ideas in the mind  
of our Grandfather-Grandmother  
    for, as many nations declare,  
    the Universe  
    by mental action  
    was created  
    by thought  
    was moved  
    So be it well proclaimed!  
our boundary is the edge of the Universe  
    and beyond,  
    to wherever the Creator's thoughts  
    go surging. . . .<sup>28</sup>

Native people are not only trying to clean up uranium tailings, purify polluted water, and mount opposition to genetically engineered organisms; they are also continuing their spiritual ways of seeking to purify and support all life by means of ceremonies and prayers. As LaDuke tells us: "In our communities, Native environmentalists sing centuries-old songs to renew life, to give thanks for the strawberries, to call home fish, and to thank Mother Earth for her blessings."<sup>29</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Fire, Lame Deer, and Richard Erdoes, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 39–40.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Bunzel, "Introduction to Zuni Ceremonialism," *Forty-Seventh Annual Report*, Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932), 483–486.

<sup>3</sup> Some writers have attacked Carlos Castaneda; however, I find that many of the insights in his first four books are quite valuable. Since he was most assuredly a man of Indigenous American ancestry, I am willing to quote him without arguing over whether his works are fiction or nonfiction. Carlos Castaneda, *Tales of Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 284–285.

<sup>4</sup> Fire, Lame Deer, and Erdoes, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, 265–266; emphasis added.

<sup>5</sup> Ruby Modesto and Guy Mount, *Not For Innocent Ears: Spiritual Traditions of a Desert Cahuilla Medicine Woman* (Angelus Oaks, Calif.: Sweetlight Books, 1980), 72.

<sup>6</sup> Sylvester M. Morey, ed., *Can The Red Man Help The White Man?* (New York: G. Church, 1970), 47.

<sup>7</sup> Black Hawk, *Black Hawk; An Autobiography* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1955), 106.

<sup>8</sup> John Gneisenau Neihardt, *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 312.

<sup>9</sup> Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 1999), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Neihardt, *The Sixth Grandfather*, 288.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 288–289.

<sup>12</sup> Pete Catches, Lakota elder, quoted in Fire, Lame Deer, and Erdoes, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, 137–139.

<sup>13</sup> Black Elk, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, rec. and ed. Joseph Epes Brown (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971), 31–32.

<sup>14</sup> Luther Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 192–193.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>16</sup> Jack D. Forbes, “Kinship is the Basic Principle of Philosophy,” *Gatherings: The En'owkin Journal of First North American Peoples* VI (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books, 1995), 144–150.

<sup>17</sup> Black Elk, *The Sacred Pipe*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Miguel Leon-Portilla, *La Filosofía Nahuatl: Estudiada en sus Fuentes* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1966), 237–238. My translation.

<sup>19</sup> Fire, Lame Deer, and Erdoes, *Lame Deer*, 155–158.

<sup>20</sup> Carlos Castaneda, *Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 69–70; Fire, Lame Deer, and Erdoes, *Lame Deer*, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Jack D. Forbes, *A World Ruled by Cannibals: The Wetiko Disease of Aggression, Violence, and Imperialism* (Davis, Calif.: D-Q University Press, 1979), 85–86. See also Jack D. Forbes, *Columbus and Other Cannibals* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1992), 145–147.

<sup>22</sup> Anna Lee Walters, *Talking Indian: Reflections on Survival and Writing* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1992), 19–20.

<sup>23</sup> See Jack D. Forbes, “A Right to Life and Shelter,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 May 2000, zone 7, 9.

<sup>24</sup> LaDuke, *All Our Relations*, 4.

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<sup>26</sup> Forbes, *Columbus and Other Cannibals*, 109–110.

<sup>27</sup> This is a proposal made by Third World nations that seeks to “capitalize” the costs of environmental damage.

<sup>28</sup> Jack D. Forbes, “The Universe Is Our Holy Book,” unpublished poem, 1992.

<sup>29</sup> LaDuke, *All Our Relations*, 3.