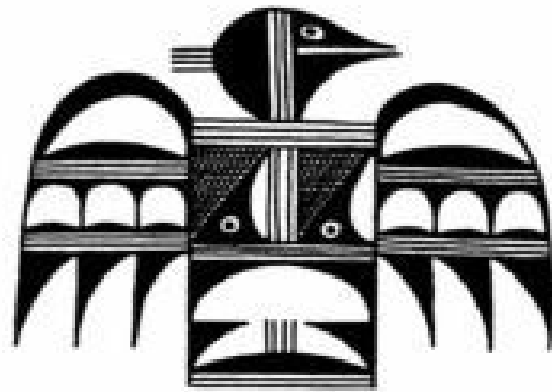


Spirits of the Earth

A Guide to Native American
Nature Symbols, Stories,
and Ceremonies



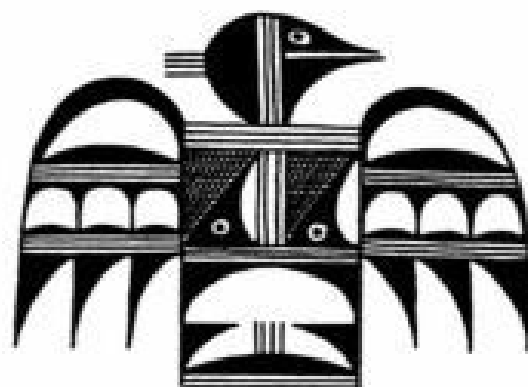
Bobby Lake-Thom
Medicine Grizzly Bear



A PLUME BOOK

Spirits of the Earth

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Nature Symbols, Stories,
and Ceremonies



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Medicine Grizzly Bear



A PLUME BOOK

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ANIMAL SPIRITS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN WITH US. WE SIMPLY NEED TO UNDERSTAND THEIR MESSAGES.

Deer are good powers and can be messengers in many different ways. They can be our eyes and ears we acquire their power. They can tell us what is up ahead on the road while traveling, help us see the future via dreams and meditation, and remind us that we should live lives that are balanced and graceful. If a woman sees a buck while traveling, it is a sign that she might soon meet a man.

Woodpeckers are symbols of wealth, good luck, happiness, and healing. If you hear or see a woodpecker pecking in a tree near your house, clap your hands three times, make a wish, and thank him for his message. He is a sign that money or a gift is coming your way. If someone is sick, the woodpecker is a sign that that person will get well.

Ants represent strength, intelligence, psychic ability, sharp thinking, and planning. Red biting ants are bad power and challengers. Other kinds of ants can be messengers and allies. Small ants are a nuisance.

LEARN THEIR MEANING, THEIR RITUALS, AND
THEIR IMPORTANCE IN OUR LIVES ...
THE SPIRITS OF THE EARTH

BOBBY LAKE-THOM is a healer who has been schooled in both Western and Native American traditions. Of Karuk, Seneca, and Cherokee descent, he has taught and lectured extensively across the United States for more than three decades and is the author of two previous books on Native American culture and spirituality. He lives in Fort Jones, California.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Native Healer
Chilula: People from the Ancient Redwoods

Spirits of the Earth

A Guide to Native American
Nature Symbols, Stories,
and Ceremonies



Bobby Lake-Thom
Medicine Grizzly Bear



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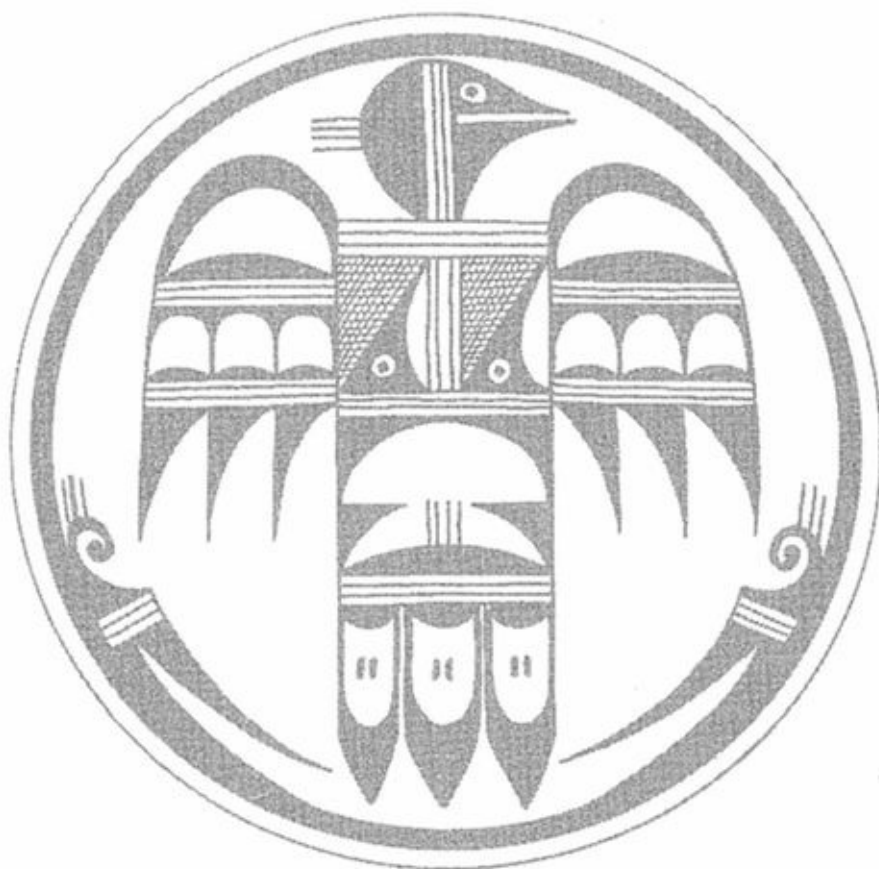
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DEDICATION

This book, and its knowledge, is dedicated to my children, my nephews and nieces, my future grandchildren and great-grandchildren; to all the Indian children in my tribe; and to all those who are searching for a better understanding of this Earth, Nature, and spirituality.

It is also dedicated to the many different tribal elders who took the time in their lives to teach me so much; their spirit will always be with me, and in our prayers, ceremonies, and traditional Native rituals.

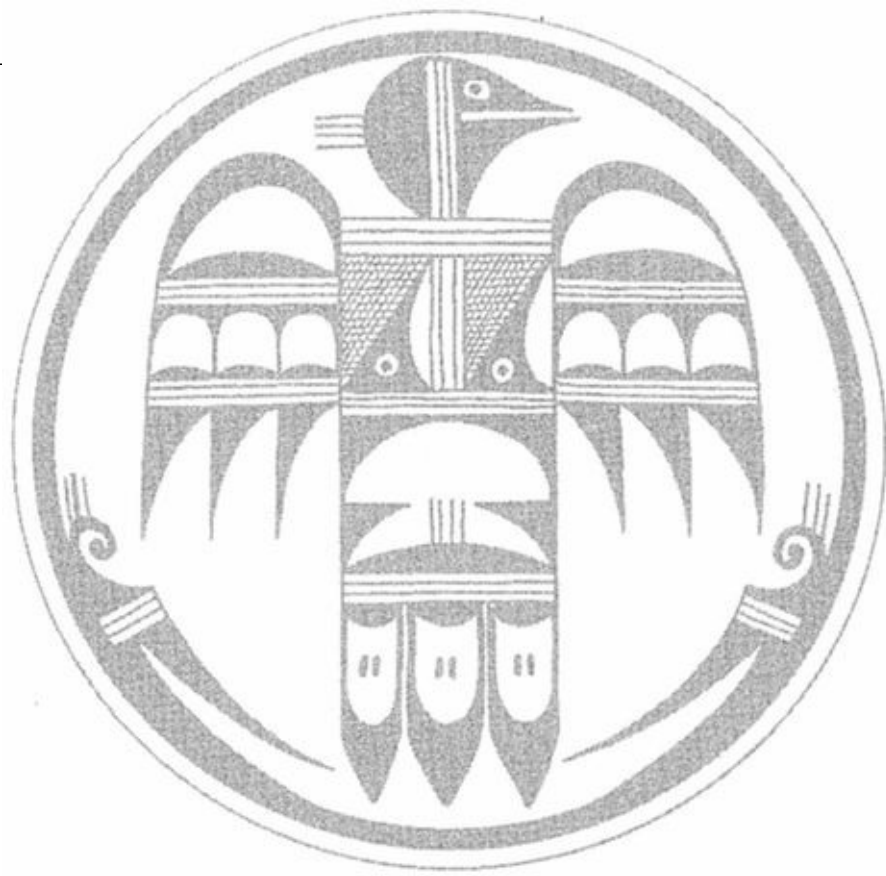
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Seeley Griffin	Yurok Elder
Chuck Donahue	Karuk/Hupa Ritual Performer
Ed Chiloquin	Klamath/Modoc Elder
Jerry Roybal	Apache-Native American Consultant
David Shaw	Apache-Vet's Upward Bound Project
Frank Douglas	Yurok Elder
Charlie Thom	Karuk Medicine Man/Ceremonial Leader
Beeman Logan	Seneca Chief
Beverly Donahue	Karuk Elder
Raymond Legu	Pitt River Elder/Hereditary Leader
Shan Davis	Karuk Ceremonial Leader
Lottie Beck	Karuk Elder
Madeline Davis	Karuk Elder
Martin High Bear	Lakota Medicine Man/Sun Dance Chief
Darryl Wilson	Pit River Leader
Tony Gali	Pit River Traditionalist
Brown Bear J. P. Mallet	Tlinget Medicine Man
Glen Raymond	Colville Indian Educator
Isadore Tom	Lummi Medicine Man/Elder
Tony Mathais	Flathead/Kootenai Medicine Man/Elder
Raymond Many Bears	Blood/Blackfeet Medicine Man
Gilbert Brady	Northern Cheyenne Sun Dance Chief
Calvin Rube	Yurok Indian Doctor/Ceremonial Leader
Frank Kanawha Lake	Indian Student (Karuk)
Mandy Moccasin	Indian Student (Crow)
Willy Colegrove	Hupa Tribal Chairman/Traditionalist
Francis Brown	Arapaho/Shoshone Elder (Medicine Wheel Coalition President)
Bill Tall Bull	Northern Cheyenne Elder
Art McConville	Warm Springs/Storyteller
Flora Jones	Wintun Indian Doctor/Elder
Dewey George	Yurok Ceremonial Leader/Elder
Albert James	Wiyot Elder



A Native Prayer

*O Great Creator,
I come before you in a bumble manner
and offer you this sacred pipe.
With tears in my eyes and an ancient song from my heart
I pray.*

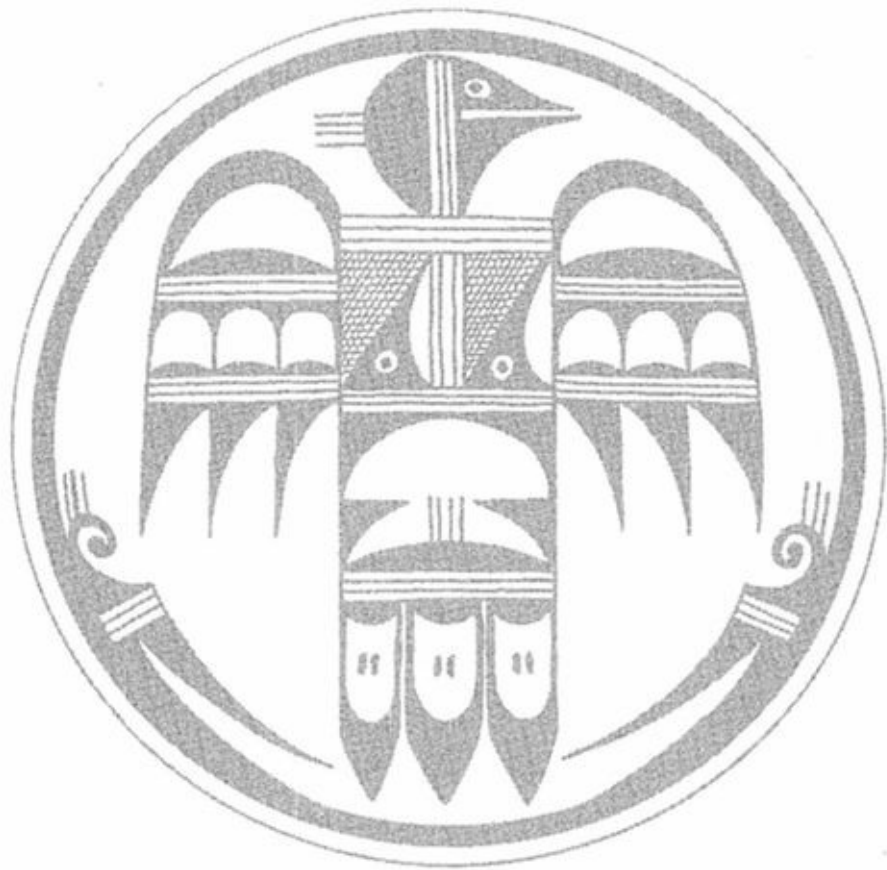
*To the four powers of Creation,
To the Grandfather Sun,
To the Grandmother Moon,
To the Mother Earth,
And to my ancestors.*

*I pray for my relations in Nature,
All those who walk, crawl, fly, and swim,
Seen and unseen,
To the good spirits that exist in every part of Creation.*

*I ask that you bless our elders and children, families and friends,
And the brothers and sisters who are in prison.
I pray for the ones who are sick on drugs and alcohol
And for those who are now homeless and forlorn.
I also pray for peace among the four races of humankind.*

*May there be good health and healing for this Earth,
May there be Beauty above me,
May there be Beauty below me,
May there be Beauty in me,
May there be Beauty all around me.
I ask that this world be filled with Peace, Love, and Beauty.*

*—Medicine Grizzly Bear
Earth Healing Ceremony
Spokane, Washington, 1990*



Introduction



The following material can be very confusing and difficult to explain to those who have not been raised in the Native American culture, and without some guidance by a mentor. The authenticity may be questioned because it deals with a form of reality that is open to interpretation. Native American cultures are based on different perceptions and experiences with reality. Symbols, meanings, and omens—the communications with the Owl, Hawk, Spider, or Snake, for example—might mean different things to different people from different cultures or beliefs, or from different systems of thinking, from differences in imagination, or from different experiences and degrees of spiritual development.

Nature can and does communicate to us humans. Within this communication via omens, signs, and mythic-religious symbols is a definite system of knowledge. Until recently this knowledge was primarily reserved for medicine men or medicine women, or what Western people call shamans, who traditionally hoarded it for themselves or occasionally shared it with their people. Consequently, not all Native American people will know about this system of knowledge, but those who have been raised in the “traditional” Native American cultural ways will have some understanding and appreciation of it.

By the same token, I want the reader to realize that the unique knowledge shared in this book is not meant to represent all Native people and tribes. Nor should it be considered a romanticism of Native spirituality. It is simply this: *an opportunity to learn how to understand and speak Nature’s language.* It is a rare opportunity for modern people to reestablish and reconnect with their relationship with Nature; to develop a real kinship with the Mother Earth, Nature, and “*all our relations*” in the Universe. It doesn’t matter what race or nationality you are, or what religious belief you subscribe to; all that is required here is an open mind and a willingness to learn.

We are all part of Nature, we are all the Great Creator’s children. So although the information shared here is from a traditional Native American healer, although it originates from Native American philosophy and ideology and is supported by Native mythology, it should not be construed as being representative of all Native American tribal or personal beliefs, knowledge, and practices. The Native American perspective and experiences being shared here are intended to help increase understanding to bridge cultural differences, yet also to highlight similarities. I am sure that upon further research and comparison you will discover that the traditional cultures in Africa, Australia, Asia, and among

certain groups throughout Europe and the Mideast might have a similar system of knowledge. Remnants of Western knowledge about Nature can be found recorded in ancient European myths, fairy tales, legends, and stories if the reader desires further comparison and study.

Despite both the positive and negative advances of Western society and its impact upon traditional Native cultures, we just can't ignore certain forms of knowledge that have stood the test of time. We also can't ignore certain supernatural and mystical encounters that some modern people experience today. Some things that occur in Nature that affect our lives cannot be explained or verified by the rational mind, the academic intellect, or the scientific approach, or by religious precept or typical Western thinking. The more sensitive, curious, and liberal-minded are really caught in a dilemma. When something strange happens to them they can't understand, they call it "supernatural." If they begin to understand it and start to believe in it, others will say they are "superstitious." This conflict between rational and intuitive thinking is still being debated by some of the greatest philosophers of the world, while psychologists, psychiatrists, and scientists are constantly trying to establish new classifications to either hide it, suppress it, or figure out some way to logically explain it.

Things such as strange encounters with omens, signs, and so-called supernatural contacts with talking animals, birds, fish, bugs, lizards, snakes, clouds, winds, ghosts, or spirits seem like a foreign world to most modern people. And yet these things do indeed exist, whether as figments of our imagination or as actual realities making physical and sensory contact.

A couple of years ago I lectured at the Theosophical Society in Wheaton, Illinois, on the topic of "Native American Mythology, Symbolism, and Spirituality." I was talking about Nature and why traditional Indians consider it sacred; how Nature is a teacher and healer to us; and why we believe it communicates through a system of symbols. At the very start of my lecture I did a prayer ritual according to custom, as an acknowledgment of respect to the ancestral spirits and Nature spirits of that region. I burned some sweet grass and tobacco as an invocation, said a short prayer in my Native language, and opened with an ancient song. Within a matter of minutes a large Raven flew in and landed on the open windowsill on the right, a Red-Shafted Flickerbird flew in at the same moment and landed on an open windowsill on the left, and lightning and thunder cracked immediately overhead several times on a perfectly clear day. Approximately 150 people were in attendance and saw this occur. Such an act is not "magic." It may be synchronistic, it may be spiritual, it may even be mystical, but it was definitely a demonstration of Nature communicating to all of us symbolically. And it was definitely a reality for everyone there who saw it.

The Raven hollered loudly, the Flickerbird whistled loudly. Both had gone out of their way to show themselves to all of us there, and the natural forces above us outside, hidden by the large building, made themselves apparent. Why?

I started my lecture in a dramatic way, seizing upon this unusual opportunity to lead into the discussion, which in turn served to provide the audience with an example of the phenomenon being discussed, not simply as a theory but as a reality. Was all this simply coincidence? I don't think so. But I am sure someone could rationalize it as an example of collective hallucination, mass hypnosis, or some other state.

So what does one in Western society do when encountering such phenomena? Who can you turn to for an explanation? Is it simply a coincidence when a small bird slams into the front room window of the house, or suddenly flies into the house, and shortly afterward a relative dies? Why just your house and not the neighbor's? Why did a Snake suddenly appear next to you while you were sitting on the lawn at lunch break with some friends or colleagues. Why didn't it slide up to someone else instead of you, as if to say, "Hey, cousin, I want your attention here a minute"? Why did the Butterfly land on

your shoulder when you were on your way to work, and not your friend's? What was it trying to tell you? Why did the Spider jump on your supervisor at work, and not you? Why did the Hawk fly in front of your car and not cars in the other lane as you were coming home from work? Why did you see that furry animal by the road, and other people with you didn't even notice it? And what did it mean?

How many times do you actually see a so-called wild creature suddenly appear next to you in a city park, on the freeway, on a country road, or near your house no matter where you live? And what would you think if a big buck suddenly walked into your house, as happened to one man who attended my lecture? Was this simply a coincidence, or did it mean something? If so, what did it mean?

Perhaps it doesn't really matter what your belief system is and it doesn't matter how acculturated, assimilated, or educated you have become because you are still a primitive being with an ancient soul deep down inside. And it doesn't matter how urbanized the world becomes, because you are still living in Nature. It may be painted over, constructed over, polluted, or even obscured by Western modernization and thinking, but Nature is still there. Spiders and Toads can be found in sterilized hospitals. Falcons fly among city skyscrapers. Coyotes steal dog food from urban dwellers' back porches. A large Moose runs down a busy city street. A Snake appears near the altar of a local church. Thousands of Grasshoppers suddenly converge upon a small town in the country. A Whale swims up the Sacramento River and won't leave. A Great White Shark is caught five miles up a freshwater river. An Owl keeps hooting around your house every night at the same time.

It doesn't matter whether you live in Chicago, New York, or Los Angeles; in the country near Bristol, along the coast by Ocean City, in the wheat fields outside Spokane, near the cornfields of Topeka, in the desert of Elko, or on the plains of Billings. Nature is always there, communicating inside and outside of your perceptions. You don't have to go out into the so-called wilderness to encounter the phenomena; sometimes the wilderness comes to you. And when it does come, some people just aren't prepared to accept it, so they either try to ignore it, dismiss an incident as simply a coincidence, or begin to consider Nature an enemy instead of an ally. They don't understand Nature's messages. What people don't understand they fear. Rather than trying to live with it, they try to conquer or eliminate it. Sometimes man destroys nature out of anger and frustration, and sometimes by deliberate intent. All those who walk, crawl, fly, swim, seen or unseen, who live among us in Nature, who are our "relations," are often treated as alien beings.

What I am trying to share here is my own interpretation and understanding of Native American knowledge as I have come to learn it and apply it. I learned it from the different elderly medicine men and women who trained me. I learned it from spending time with our Native elders and listening to their ancient "Grandfather stories." I learned it as part of my many years of training as a shamanist and doctor. As I learned more about the traditions, I became more aware, and more sensitive to them, and spent more time bonding with Nature.

There are a lot of people who honestly respect Nature, who want to love and care for Nature, and who would like to learn how to bond more with Nature or to heal their relationship with Nature. In order to learn how Nature actually communicates, however, we can turn to the traditional Native American people, elders, and healers for guidance, to Native mythology for teachings, and to some form of ritualization in order to gain experience. It is with this in mind that I have decided to share the following material. As a traditional Native healer, and because I truly believe in the value of Nature, I feel an urgency to disclose this material. If things in society get to the extreme that Nature can no longer communicate to us, or if it gets to the point that we, as human beings, can no longer recognize and understand symbolic communication, then we will no longer thrive as a species.

A Spiritual Understanding About Nature

I believe Nature communicates to all people. Maybe not all the time but at least some of the time. It appears, however, that most people are not aware of this communication going on around them. Some who notice it either don't believe it or they don't understand it. Profound encounters and messages are considered supernatural. Natural, signs and omens are considered superstitions and direct experiences are labeled hallucinations. Are we to believe that Nature itself is not real? Or have we just lost touch with the true reality?

When the first Europeans came to this country, they saw our Native American people praying to the Sun, Moon, Stars, Rivers, and Lakes; to the Trees and Plants; to the Wind, Lightning, and Thunder and even to the Birds, Animals, Fish, Snakes, and Rocks. They called us pagans, heathens, and savages. For some strange reason they developed the idea that we did not believe in God, although in many different tribal languages there were references to a Great Spirit, the Great Creator, the Maker, the Great Mystery, or the Great Invisible One. The truth is that not only did the American Indians worship God, but they also respected and communicated with that which God had created.

Despite the forces of acculturation, traditional Native American Indians and the medicine men/women still understand the sacredness of Nature. They see the life-giving force of the Great Spirit flowing through all things in the Universe. Because of ancient beliefs, teachings, and spiritual practices, they feel and maintain a direct kinship with all of Creation. According to traditional Native American belief systems, everything is a source of "power," and as a result it should be revered. The traditional Native American believes that each living thing in Nature has a spirit of its own, in addition to being connected to and part of the Great Spirit. That is why we pray and give thanks to the Sun, Moon, Stars, Rain, Wind, Waters, and all those that walk, crawl, fly, and swim, both seen and unseen. We realize that we cannot survive or live without our "relations." We also realize that they cannot live without us; hence there is a reciprocal relationship.

Evidence of this belief system can be found in Native myths, legends, and stories. Here one can find reference to the animals and birds as "people." The Bear is our grandfather, Rattlesnake our aunt, Beaver our cousin, Eagle our uncle, Deer our sister, and Buffalo our brother. But in a deeper sense of ideology, they are not only our "relations" but are also considered our teachers, protectors, guardians, supernatural aids, and sources of power and knowledge. This is not romanticism, it is reality. I believe modern people can learn from this ancient reality if they are willing to be open-minded. There is a special kind of telepathic and symbolic understanding between the traditional Native American and his/her relations in nature. We communicate through praying, talking, singing, dancing, meditating, touching, smelling, and/or offering tobacco, herbal smoke, food, or some other gift to one of our relations. Since Nature's language is symbolic, it communicates back to us in a unique way, with natural symbols.

Let me give you an example. One time, when I was a young boy, I was sitting on a riverbank fishing with my grandfather. We saw a Fox suddenly come down the side of the bank toward her den. She stopped, lifted her head up to the wind, and sniffed around in a nervous way. She then ran into the den, picked up one of her pups, and took it to higher ground. The second time she came down, my grandfather started talking to her in his Native language. She stopped as if listening to him intently and then whistled at him four times. She ran back into her den and grabbed a second pup, then carried

it up over the riverbank to a new home she had made, quite some distance from the river's edge. At that point my grandfather turned to me and said: "Hurry up, get your gear and fish, and let's get back to the house. We've got a lot of work to do right away." So I did as I was told. When we returned, my grandfather instructed other members of the family to move the tractor, all farm equipment, and the livestock far away from the river's edge. In a serious and urgent tone of voice, Grandpa told my uncles and cousins to board up windows and secure the house, barn, and sheds. My grandmother and aunt assumed responsibility for preparing emergency food and materials. Within a few hours a very bad storm came. Winds and rain raged across the mountain range for hours. That evening the river flooded. A considerable number of our neighbors suffered damage to livestock and property, while we were safe.

For years I wondered how my grandfather knew a flood was coming. A lot of people were amazed at the so-called psychic premonitions and power he often demonstrated. Whether it was good news or bad news, a positive event or a negative situation, for some reason he always seemed to have a way of knowing before certain events would occur. My great-grandmother, Kitty Hawk, was like that too. When questioned, she would often say: "Oh, a little bird told me!"

Grandpa wasn't a medicine man but he did believe in the "old Indian ways." He didn't like to be called psychic because he said the knowledge was there for everyone. He usually gave credit for his knowledge to the "Indian stories" that had been told to him as a boy. He taught me a lot of these stories, some from his own tribal heritage and the stories he had heard from friends from other tribes. And my learning was expanded in later years, as I spent more time with elders from different reservations across the continent. It was from this upbringing that I began to realize that Nature is constantly talking to us. Unfortunately, very few people ever take the time to listen, watch, or learn the ancient language system. In contemporary society, no one teaches our children Indian stories at home or in school. As a result, Nature is becoming foreign to people and the esoteric knowledge is being lost.

Grandpa eventually revealed the secret to me. He said the Fox had told him a flood was coming. She had warned him symbolically by her actions. The Fox knew by "instinct," a natural source of knowledge and power that the traditional Indian uses as part of his spiritual growth and development and which most Western people and more assimilated Native Americans are no longer aware of. Instinct, however, is a reality. It is also a natural system of communication between Nature and the species, the mind and the body. The communication might come in the form of a physical symbol, but it might be more intuitive, making itself known through language, appearing as a hunch, a feeling, or an inner voice in a dream or through a vision.

Many Western people consider such forms of natural knowledge mysterious, supernatural, or superstitious. They don't understand it and they fear it, and as a result they find ways to ignore or discredit it. The art of studying signs and omens, however, is an ancient form of knowledge that was used by all races of humankind at one time or another in the history of their evolution. Europeans, for example, studied certain signs in Nature to find out when to plant or harvest crops, when to hunt, when to make sea voyages, and even when to get married. Have you ever heard "Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning; red sky at night, sailor's delight"? Some of this ancient, Western knowledge can still be found in the *Farmer's Almanac* today. For traditional Native American shamans, natural knowledge has always been a reality and a natural part of their ideology and spirituality. And although communication with Nature is an ancient system of knowledge, it is not archaic because that knowledge is still relevant today. We should remember, too, that not all signs, messages, or omens are bad.

Here is another example of using ancient knowledge to approach a modern problem. A friend of mine is from the Colville Indian Reservation in Washington State. One day he came to Spokane to talk to me about some personal problems. He had been unemployed for quite some time, was without money, and was worried about debts. While we sat drinking coffee and talking, I reached over into the cabinet and brought out the sweet grass herb and a Raven wing. I told him a few stories about the Raven, about how hard the Raven's life is, but somehow the bird always seems to survive, to "make it" in life. According to our Native myths, the Raven can bring good luck, if one is willing to make prayers to the Raven and ask for his help. So we did a cleansing ritual with the sweet grass, made prayers to the Raven, and threw some food up on the roof for him. We heard a large squawk a few minutes later, and watched a big Raven fly up on the roof. I told my friend, who was staring in amazement: "See, sometimes it works, huh?" A few days later he called me, very excited. He said he'd seen a Raven flying toward his house with food in its mouth, and he wanted to know what it meant as a sign. I told him it was a good sign, that his prayers would be answered. I also told him that the Raven was symbolically showing him that a gift was coming to his home. Later that day he received an unexpected inheritance check in the mail. And as if that wasn't enough, he also received a new job offer.

Fact, fiction, or fantasy? Who knows how communication with Nature works or why. All I know is that in some situations it does work. Our tribal elders and Native myths and Indian stories teach us that it is perfectly natural to call upon "supernatural" aid when all other resources seem to fail us. We are taught that the Earth is full of many different kinds of spirits and powers, both good and bad, positive and negative, physical and spiritual, seen and unseen. And some of these "powers" are even neutral. We are taught that the "powers" come in the form of natural forces and elements of Nature, such as Lightning and Thunder, Wind and Clouds, Earthquake and Fire; and in the Animal people, Bird people, Fish people, Snake people, Bug people, Tree people, Plant people, and Rock people. In other words, every part of the Earth is a physical and spiritual source of power and energy that directly affects us, the "*Human people*," because we also are an integral part of the great family in Creation.

In order for us to survive as a species, we must learn to identify the purpose, function, and symbolic meaning of these natural powers. We must learn how such powers actually influence and/or affect our lives. We are taught by our elders, and via myths and ritual, how to use these powers in an efficacious manner. So my friend was taught how to call upon the Raven as a spirit guide for assistance. In a similar fashion, a medicine man/woman will recite an ancient mythic prayer formula as a means of bringing thunderclouds and rain.

I can understand how most people in Western society would consider the concept and acts of signs and omens magical, but they are also real. I, too, have been educated in Western thinking. I have earned different master's degrees, and have been trained by Western education to think "logically." But I have been fortunate to have also been taught by Native elders in a cultural context, and in a culturally spiritual way. Hence I have learned how to make the appropriate psychic switch and to think with both sides of my mind-brain complex. And I have learned that it is perfectly natural to call upon "supernatural aid" whenever I need help in my life. Whether that supernatural help is viewed as a projection of my subconscious mind or exists as a separate reality does not really matter. What matters is the fact that it truly exists for me as reality, and I have been taught how to see and understand it. And I believe all people who want to learn can acquire the same kind of knowledge. Our survival as a species depends on whether we progress with intelligence, meaning "whole intelligence" or whether we continue to remain limited. Most people are never taught how to use the unconscious, the intuitive-spiritual side of the brain.

Let me share another incident. A few months ago, while I was washing dishes, a little Spider came traveling down her web right in front of my face. She stopped for a moment to get my attention, then proceeded to go down into the drain. At the same time, I had my hand on the garbage disposal switch. I removed my hand out of curiosity, and partly out of respect for the Spider, not out of fear. I stopped what I was doing to try to communicate with the Spider. I even talked to her directly in English. "Oh hello, little sister. Why did you come to visit me, what are you trying to tell me?" Then all of a sudden she jumped up on the sink and watched me. Out of curiosity I reached down into the drain where she had come from, and found a broken glass that was hidden from my view. Now, if it wasn't for the little Spider, which most other people would probably have killed out of fright, I would have turned on the disposal and sent shards of glass flying everywhere, I could have been injured, and possibly scarred for life! So, as you can see, Nature is also in the city. It can be found in our own homes and houses, and even in apartments and professional buildings in city skyscrapers. Thus there is an opportunity for us to learn from Nature everywhere, if only we open our eyes and our minds.

The Native American people have been studying signs and omens for eons. They use their knowledge to predict weather changes, as part of strategic planning in housing construction, or for planning trips, ceremonies, and in the past for making war. They use it as a means of survival. Europeans had similar forms of knowledge. Some farmers in this country have retained it, perhaps because they live closer to Nature and depend upon Nature for survival, whereas the more educated and urban-oriented have lost their bond with Nature; and their thinking has become more left-brain oriented. For example, those who depend upon Nature for subsistence and survival have learned that Deer mating early is a sign of an early winter. But did you know that you can also tell how harsh the winter will be by looking at the bark on trees; by how thick the hair is getting on horses or your pet dog? And we know that the sudden appearance of Robins and Flickerbirds dancing in a crazy, nervous way around the front yard is a sign that a storm is coming. The appearance of spots on the Sun, called Sun Dogs, is an omen of droughts and social eruptions. When Sharks and Porpoises suddenly start going up freshwater rivers, it is an indication that floods are forthcoming. When Sea Lions rush up on the beach, a tidal wave is forthcoming. The sudden appearance of small Flies in the house is a sign that rain is coming, or even possibly illness and disease. The presence of large Blowflies in the house is an indication that evil is stalking the family. The sudden appearance of other kinds of bugs in Nature, such as the Lady Bug, in large mass can forewarn us of hazardous fires. Even different kinds of clouds can be messengers, telling us that a tornado or a hurricane is coming. Rings around the Moon serve as a sign that rain is forthcoming; different-colored clouds partially blocking the Sun or Moon can serve to warn of a coming sand-storm. The obvious lack of visible clouds or the bright red color of certain clouds can also warn of droughts. And a bird suddenly flying into the house is a sign of illness or even death, unless you have the knowledge and power to recognize the omen and change the situation.

All of this information is directly related to human instinct. It is survival knowledge. We have the right to learn it, use it, and not be taught to be ashamed because we believe in it. A person can learn more about this kind of natural knowledge by studying ancient myths and their symbolic meanings, and inner knowledge. Even scientists are beginning to study the behavior of snakes, bugs, animals, and birds, domestic and wild, as a means of predicting potential earthquakes and other natural disasters. We must move beyond the stereotype that such knowledge is simply superstitious and learn to see out its deeper meanings.

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