

## Eco Exercise for the Soul - Study Tribal Peoples' Relationship to the World

***"It is doubtful if American society can move very far or very significantly without a major revolution in theological concepts .... Within the traditions, beliefs and customs of the American Indian people are the guidelines for human-kind's future.***

*There is a reason why shrines exist ... Mount Sinai, for example, has been a holy mountain for a considerable length of time, thus indicating that it has a religious existence over and above any temporary belief held by particular people. If this concept is true, then economics cannot and should not be the sole determinant of land use. Unless the sacred places are discovered and protected and used as religious places, there is no possibility of a nation ever coming to grips with the land itself. Without this basic relationship, national stability is impossible.*

***That a fundamental element of religion is an intimate relationship with the land on which the religion is practiced should be a major premise of future theological concern."***

*~Deloria, Vine. God is Red and We talk, You listen.*

*"The Creator gave to us all the living things so that we would know how to act. The natural world is our Bible; by watching the chipmunk and the meadowlark and even the tiniest flower we learn the lessons that the Creator has put before us. Everything is sacred. This very land is our church."*

*~Chief Fools Crow of the Oglala Lakota*

Think of all the great tribal teachers and their relationship to the rest of the created order...

How was ritual and initiation a part of life?

How were the seasons honored and celebrated? Have we lost touch with the natural rhythms of the earth?

What reverence and relationship did they have for the earth and living things?

Find stories and quotes from your favorite teachers

Do you sometimes act in a way that would not be consistent with any of these leaders attitude to the earth? Name them. Make a new commitment to live a Holy Life.

Honor the sacred.  
Honor the Earth, our Mother.  
Honor the Elders.  
Honor all with whom we  
share the Earth:-  
Four-leggeds, two-leggeds,  
winged ones,  
Swimmers, crawlers,  
plant and rock people  
Walk in balance and beauty

*~Native American Elder, Black Elk*



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Oh, Great Spirit  
Whose voice I hear in the winds,  
And whose breath gives life to all the world,  
hear me, I am small and weak,  
I need your strength and wisdom.  
Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold  
the red and purple sunset.  
Make my hands respect the things you have  
made and my ears sharp to hear your voice.  
Make me wise so that I may understand the things  
you have taught my people.  
Let me learn the lessons you have  
hidden in every leaf and rock.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother,  
but to fight my greatest enemy - myself.  
Make me always ready to come to you  
with clean hands and straight eyes.  
So when life fades, as the fading sunset,  
my Spirit may come to you without shame.

(translated by Lakota Sioux Chief Yellow Lark in 1887)  
published in Native American Prayers - by the Episcopal Church.

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