



Spirits of the Earth: A Guide to Native American Nature Symbols, Stories, and Ceremonies

Bobby Lake-Thom

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"There are ancient secrets and lessons hidden in nature. If you seek for guidance, you will discover truth."
—Bobby Lake-Thom
Much of the ancient knowledge that has been passed down from Native American medicine men, or shamans is in danger of being lost. Bobby Lake-Thom, a Native American healer known as Medicine Grizzly Bear, has sought to preserve this powerful heritage by sharing his wisdom and experience learning from the world around us. The result is **Spirits of the Earth**, an extraordinary compilation of legends and rituals about nature's ever-present signs. From the birds that soar above us to the insincts beneath our feet, Bobby Lake-Thom shows how the creatures of the earth can aid us in healing and self-knowledge.

What does it mean if a hawk appears in a dream? What are the symbolic interpretations of a deer, a skunk, a raccoon? Lake-Thom, who has studied with the elders of many tribes, explains the significance of animal figures as manifestations of good or evil, and shows how we can develop our own powers of awareness and intuition. The first book of its kind, this practical and enlightening resource includes dozens of fashinating animal myths and legends, as well as exercises and activities that draw upon animal powers for guidance, healing, wisdom, and the expansion of spiritual influences in our lives. You'll discover here:

How animals, birds, and insects act as signs and omens
The significance of vision quests
How to make and use a medicine wheel
The role of spirit symbols—and how they affect the unconscious
Excercises for creative dreaming
The power of the earth-healing ceremony
How to increase your spiritual strength and create sacred spaces
And more

Spirits of the Earth: A Guide to Native American Nature Symbols, Stories, and Ceremonies Details

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From Reader Review *Spirits of the Earth: A Guide to Native American Nature Symbols, Stories, and Ceremonies* for online ebook

JP says

It's a modern perspective, but still very mystical. The various stories -- even one about how the stories were started by the big rock -- are interesting, as are the meaning of the various animal signs. Taken to the extent suggested eliminates self-determinism.

Andrea Soukup says

A Grand View

It was a blending of cultures. Eye opening in its plea for acknowledgement. I will be referring to it often.

Amanda says

kooky, unbelievable examples, such as a shaman who summons a raven each time he steps outside with a feather.

short, but valuable explanation of native american spiritual belief about nature. beliefs include: nature communicates with people through symbolic language, the earth is a living creature, instinct is a natural system of communication within the body/mind, medicine wo/men are shamans.

Al Gritten says

A good general overview of diverse Native American understandings of signs, symbols, and omens, including stories of the earth, creation, and the relationship of indigenous peoples to the animals and nature. It is very difficult to generalize Native American beliefs as they vary, sometimes considerably, from tribe to tribe, but Lake-Thom does a good job of giving a general overview and then adding specific understandings from a variety of traditions.

Steven says

I read this book as research for a creative project that involves a Native American figure. The book was educational up to a point, but the bulk of it has to do with the symbolic meanings and messages brought to our lives by animals, insects, reptiles, and birds. Unless I did not read the information correctly, it suggests that the impromptu appearances of these creatures, which the Native American cultures variously regard as

"spirits", have meaning that may bode either good or bad in our lives. In other words, that bird that had somehow soared through your open window and is flying about your living room is there to tell you something; the appearance of a snake or a moth is laden with a meaning beyond the fact that it may just be in search of food, the warmth of the sun, or a patio hurricane lamp. A whale too close to the beach may be warning of an impending flood or hurricane; you get the drift. I enjoyed the flight of imagination; perhaps there is something to it, but as I am unlikely to encounter a beaver or mole, a deer or bear where I live, I was unable to maintain interest in what such appearances might signify. I am not so skeptical as to not believe that nature sends us messages of various sorts, but it is applied here a bit to liberally and literally to my mind. Particularly complex was the assertion all too often that a particular animal could be either an ominous spirit or a very good critter to make an appearance in one's life and that we are thus to observe the context in which they appear. I would be more likely to be fleeing a black bear or a rattlesnake than waiting for it to impart me a "message" of any sort! I was hoping for a bit more Native American spiritual scope in this book, but it appears the author has written another volume, so perhaps I started with the wrong book. If you are interested in this topic, by all means check out this informative book. If you are a spiritual skeptic and not inclined toward assuming deeper meanings in the world of nature around us, you might want to pass on this one. It is recommended for those seriously interested in Native American spirituality, not the merely curious such as myself.

Kenley Raye says

I absolutely love this book and continue to return to it constantly. It has such great advice and wisdom. A must have book for anyone's book shelf!

Gwendoline Van says

I found this book delightful. From learning more about native perspective on animals and natural language to learning to pay closer attention myself, this easy-to-read book has been pure joy.

Animals, plants, the natural world ... it holds messages for us all. If we take the time to pause, listen, and appreciate, we, too, can learn to decipher what the little bird says.

Quotes:

"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." (9)

Law of duality: Everything has a physical and spiritual side

Law of Reciprocity: You can't just take without giving back or replenishing; if you do, you break the cycle and become responsible for creating problems (23)

"Understanding the meaning and value of these symbols in mythology and ritual, and as they appear in our

daily life, and using the symbols in a religious and spiritual way reminds us that we are an integral part of Nature. We are not separate from it, as the Western value system teaches us." (24)

How does your name connect you to nature? Is nature whispering a new name for you? Sometimes, it takes vision quests, sitting, waiting, etc. to ask for your own name. (40)

Power Centers and Sacred Places: Mount Sinai, Pyramids, Stonehenge, Macchu Picchu, Mayan Temples, Mount Fuji, Black Hills, Himalayan Mountains, Bear Butte, Devil's Tower, Mount Shasta, Dawn Blue Lake, Four Corners area, San Francisco Peaks, Chief Mountain, Allegheny Mountains, Cascades, Niagara, Lake Tahoe, Great Smokey Mountains, Chimney Rock, Lake Tahoe, Crater Lake, Mount Rainier, Redwood Forests, Trinity Alps (178 - 9)

Power centers are like our chakras. The Earth is a living organism, and the power centers are like the endocrine glands or psychic centers. How well can the Earth function if we constantly pollute her power centers? (182)

"The continued economic exploitation of the Earth's vital power centers is causing a very serious imbalance worldwide which can no longer be ignored." (188)

"We may have been considered lawless people, but we were on pretty good terms with the Great Spirit, Creator and Ruler of all. You White people assumed we were savages. You didn't understand. When we sang our praises to the Sun or Moon or Wind, you condemned us as lost souls just because our form of worship was different from yours.

We saw the Great Spirit's work in almost everything: Sun, Moon, Stars, Trees, Wind, and Mountains. Sometimes we approached Him through these things. Was that so bad? I think we have a true believe in the Supreme Being, a strong faith than that of most Whites, who have called us pagans ... Indians living close to Nature and Nature's Ruler are not living in darkness.

Did you know that Trees talk? Well, they do. They talk to each other, and they'll talk to you if you listen. Trouble is, most White people don't listen. They never learned to listen to the Indians, so I don't suppose they'll listen to other voices in Nature. But I have learned a lot from trees. Sometimes about the weather, sometimes about the animals, and sometimes about the Great Spirit."

Jonellys Maldonado says

"The Mother Earth is not only becoming polluted but she is also becoming weak and very sick... If she dies, we all die; it is as simple as that. Thus, what I have tried to present here is not a metaphysical and romantic motion but a different form of truth and reality"

This book is filled with knowledge on the Native American legends as well as with a deep understanding of communicating with Mother Nature. keeping an open mind is a must if you plan on reading it!

Jessica says

Really interesting stories to go with many of the animals. Well researched and respectful. A quick easy read (took me so long b/c I ordered it but it never came...) Inspires many images and stories in my head, even after reading. It is missing some animals I would be interested in knowing what he thought about them but such is life. I would read more by him and suggest to a friend interested in these things.

Jon says

I am reading this right now, on loan. I really love this book by Bobby Lake-Thom. A good guide for the modern person trying to re-acquaint themselves with the natural world all around them. As we are continually bombarded with day to day life in a modern world full of tasks far removed from or distracting from the natural world it is great to have someone show us the path back to our friendship with the earth around us. ...

Stephanie says

I enjoyed reading this book. First published in 1997, it takes me back to my younger days of learning about various earth-based spiritualities. I very much like the many stories about animals, insects, reptiles, and birds from our part of the world. I also value the reverence and respect for the teachings of the elders. Many stories from many different nations. Inviting images.

Kristal says

A nice guide to understanding Native American beliefs and their use of Nature to guide them through life. Very easy to read and understand, the main theme being that Nature can and does communicate with us, if we would only open our eyes and ears and listen.

Kristi Hudecek-Ashwill says

What an incredible book! I learned so much from it and it was worth every penny I paid for it. It is filled with useful information that sometimes seems far-fetched but when I started doubting, I'd remember just who wrote this book and remembered that this author is a holy man, shaman, medicine man, whatever you want to call him. He knows. He's been taught all of this since he was a child and has been brought up in the traditional ways.

I took the time to do the exercises with the stories that were told and after I looked back at what I had written, it was like an epiphany. I had to read some of them several times, which he recommends you do anyway, and I was like, "I get it!" I was able to make the connection on most of them. A few of them, I am still thinking about.

In the book, he talks about birds, animals, insects, reptiles and what they mean when you see them and how to handle them if they make a sudden, unwanted appearance inside your house. I will give you two examples of my own personal experiences:

Just yesterday, I was standing out in my garage smoking a cigarette when a tiny little spider lowered himself into my line of vision. My first instinct was to give him a fatal thwack. But no. After reading that part of the book, I knew he might be trying to tell me something. Spiders are messengers so as insane as this is going to sound, I asked him what was going on. Of course, he didn't answer me but now I am looking for something that I may have blown off before. He lingered there for a minute then he went back up and I haven't seen him since. But not all spiders are good.

Another thing that totally made sense to me is the section on cockroaches. Never in my life had I had to live with cockroaches until I bought this house and then they came into my house from next door after the exterminator had gone in there and done his job after the slothful people who'd lived there before had been evicted and moved out. We definitely had a problem with them so we called the exterminator...twice. He came and he did his thing and they were gone for a little while but then they came back but not as badly. We took matters into our own hands then and got ourselves some Roach Prufe and sprinkled that around. That seemed to do the trick, too. But while all of this was going on, people were coming and going out of our house and some of them weren't the good kind of people. Once we got rid of the bad people, the roaches went away. A few of them were friends of our sons and one was a person who just pretended to be a friend of my mine and my husband's. Once these people were out of our lives, the roaches were gone and we haven't seen any since.

I took this book very seriously and I learned so much from it. I now understand the sacredness of certain places on Earth even though I had a great idea before. I understand how we are all connected which really wasn't a revelation to me but this reinforced it for me. I no longer think that animals are a step beneath us. They are our equals and they are our relatives and should be treated with respect. They will talk to you if you choose to listen. Nature will talk to you if you listen.

I also understand some of the ceremonies and someday hope to make my own medicine wheel. I also want to dream creatively. All of this and more is in this book.

Yes, I am part Indian but probably not enough to make a big difference. But you don't have to be to understand this book. You just have to open your mind and your heart and be open to what's being said. Some will think it's hokey or just a big put-on but these stories have been passed down from generation to generation and have substance and standing.

This is a life changing book and I know I will be referring back to it often. While I'm preaching this, I guess I would recommend Native American Wisdom, too. My oldest son is 11 and just got done reading his copy of Native American Wisdom and told me it was probably the greatest book he's ever read. Native American Wisdom is required reading for both of my sons when they turn 12 and I'm thinking I might be adding this book to their short list of required reading.

Emily says

This book sets out to teach the reader about various Native American cultures, their symbols, stories, and ceremonies. It does this without being too dry or dense - this is book that a lot of people could pick up and read if they wanted. The author is an expert in his field, as he is a modern day medicine man. This book could have gone into MUCH greater detail about a lot of the information within, I'm sure, but then it would be much dryer and harder to read. This is something I'd recommend to teens and adults that were researching Native American life or interested in Native American tradition and spirituality, but that aren't into it on an academic level.

Michelle says

I first read this book as I was trying to figure out the symbolism of a dream-tiger, and then I found it such an incredible book I couldn't put it down and I find myself reading it over and over again. Bobby Lake-Thom explains the importance of communicating with Mother Earth and respecting Nature. There is always this conflict between intuitive thinking and rational thinking in our society. He uncovers this mysterious world of animal spirits and their meaning in our lives. It is such an insightful guidebook!
