

*and they're bringing water. You feel like you're dying of thirst, but there are limits around you, protection with hundreds of tobacco ties. You do not leave this circle, and this vision will disappear when they come to offer the water or sometimes they will just drop it on the ground. Or someone comes and helps you with their strength and gives you messages.<sup>36</sup>*

One is not supposed to ask for a vision for selfish personal reasons. The point of this individual ordeal, which is designed to be physically and emotionally stressful, is to ask how one can help the people and the planet.

## Contemporary issues

Sadly, traditional spiritual wisdom has been largely obliterated in many parts of the world by those who wanted to take the people's lands or save their souls with some other path to the divine. Under the slogan "Kill the Indian and save the man," the American founder of the boarding school system for native children took them away from their families at a young age and transformed their cultural identity, presenting the native ways as inferior and distancing them from normal participation in the traditional sacred life. They were exposed to the "modern" worldview, which does not believe in miracles, supernatural healings, or divine intervention—thus contradicting thousands of years of received wisdom in their own tradition.

Native Americans who converted to Christianity have sometimes been missionaries themselves, helping to spread Christian devotion among indigenous peoples. Sometimes Natives converted to try to appease the dominant non-Natives, but sometimes it was the personal example of these missionaries that caused Native Americans to embrace the "White Man's Faith," even though it was the religion of those who were oppressing them. A young nineteenth-century Choctaw Christian named Kanchi, for example, drowned while trying to save teenagers whose raft swamped as the Choctaw tribe crossed the swollen and turbulent Mississippi River under forcible removal from their ancestral lands. So touched were they by his sacrifice that the tribe members began reading his Bible in his memory and eventually formed a new Christian community in what is now Oklahoma. Indigenous spirituality has become so mixed with Christianity that many Native American Christians are now trying to re-examine their religious lives and identities honestly. Marie Therese Archambault asserts:

*When we read the Gospel, we must read it as Native people, for this is who we are. We can no longer try to be what we think the dominant society wants us to be. ... We just learn to subtract the chauvinism and cultural superiority with which this Gospel was often presented to our people. We have to go beyond the white gospel in order to perceive its truth.<sup>37</sup>*

A similar policy of attempted acculturation was conducted between the 1880s and 1960s with Australian aboriginal children. Taken away from their parents by force, the "stolen generation" were often abused or used as slaves. Five children of Eliza Saunders were taken away by social workers while she and her husband were looking for employment. She recalls, "You walk miles and miles and find

they're not there. It's like your child has been killed." One of her children, the Green Party politician Charmaine Clarke, managed to run away from foster care after eleven years and rejoin her mother, but she says of her missing family history, "When myself and my brothers and sisters go home, we five have to sit there quite mute and just listen, observe. Because we were never there."<sup>38</sup> In 1998, Australian citizens tried to apologize for this "attempted genocide," with some 300,000 signatures in Sorry Books and hundreds of emotional multiracial ceremonies in churches, schools, and cities across Australia.

In Mexico, decades of rebellion of indigenous people against central rule and cultural suppression seemed to be turning a corner in 2001, when a caravan of rebel leaders from the south was welcomed by tens of thousands as they entered Mexico City to request political autonomy for the ten million indigenous people of Mexico. Chiapas rebel leader Subcommander Marcos declared, "It is the hour of the Indian people, of the people of the color of the earth. What they fear is that there is no more 'you' and 'us,' because we are all the color of the earth."<sup>39</sup> However, a proposed indigenous rights bill which would have brought considerable autonomy for indigenous people in Mexico was altered to the extent that they may now have even fewer legal rights than before.

In Africa, despite changing social contexts, traditional religion is still strong among some groups, such as the Yoruba, whose priest-diviners are still respected, and to whom the *orisa* reportedly contacted in trance still reveal the nearness and importance of the invisible forces. However, in contemporary urban African areas, the traditional interest in the flow of the past into the present, with value placed on the intensity of present experience, has been rapidly replaced by a Westernized view of time, in which one is perpetually anxious about the future. This shift has led to severe psychological disorientation and social and political instability. Those whose spiritual cultures have been merged with world religions such as Islam, Buddhism, or Christianity are now examining the relationship of their earlier tradition to the intercultural missionary traditions. African scholars have noted, for instance, that to put God in the forefront, as Christians do, does violence to the greater social importance of ancestor spirits in African traditional religions.

Indigenous peoples have also been victims of disastrous development projects. In Zimbabwe, thousands of traditional self-sufficient Vaduma people were displaced when their ancestral lands were flooded to create a huge artificial lake for irrigating an area hundreds of kilometers away. Jameson Kurasha of the University of Zimbabwe describes the effects on the Vaduma:

*When the "idea" of development was imposed on them, families were separated by a massive stretch of water. Now the Murinye Mugabe families are alienated from each other. They are now peoples without a tangible past to guide and unite them because their past (i.e. ancestors) are either buried or washed away by the lake. They are basically a people without a home to point to. The separation has left a cultural damage that will never be restored.<sup>40</sup>*

In Malaysia, the indigenous Orang Asli people and anthropologists, sociologists, and development workers who are familiar with their situation feel that the Malaysian government is intentionally but discreetly forcing the people from their traditional homelands so that the government can appropriate the timber-rich



## The Orang Asli of Malaysia: Traditions being Lost

In peninsular Malaysia, about 147,412 indigenous people known as the Orang Asli ("original peoples") still maintain some of their traditional ways.

Among them are a subgroup known as the Jakun, inhabitants of what was once an extensive peat swamp forest. Traditionally the Jakun lived by hunting and gathering, as well as cultivating small plots temporarily before moving on after harvesting the crops. They lived simply, with great respect for the forest, the forest animals, and the invisible spirits around them. Now, however, much of the peat swamp forest has been logged, drained, and converted into oil palm or rubber plantations. Destruction of the sponge-like peat swamp forest has brought increased flooding to their traditional home along the Bebar River, so severe that the Department of Orang Asli Affairs shifted them to a permanent settlement on higher ground in Kampung Simpai. Their children have been sent to distant boarding schools along with Malay children; there they are exposed to popular culture, and have become very fond of televisions, cell phones, and Western clothing. The Orang Asli remain one of the poorest sectors within Muslim-majority Malaysia.

In the past, the lives of the Jakun were governed by a series of taboos. For example, they were not to chop down unfamiliar trees or joke or shout in the forest, lest the spirit of a tree might possess or curse them. No animals thought to have the quality of *badi* (sacred spirits or spirits of the dead) should be killed or harmed, lest those spirits might retaliate in a manner resembling the way in which the animal was harmed.

Through these and other such taboos, the people were traditionally taught to live carefully, always mindful of the spirits around them. Thus they behaved respectfully everywhere, whether in the forest, in the river, or at home. Abu Bin Le, a fifty-three-year-old man who is now helping in the Heritage Garden Project sponsored by the European Commission and the United Nations Development Program to document and conserve indigenous medicinal plants and promote sustainable use of the forest, decries the loss of reverence among the younger generations:

*Kids these days do not believe because [the dire results of breaking taboos] have not happened during their lifetime. The forests surrounding our village are gone, so there are no spirits left. Maybe just a few, but not as many as in the old days. Back then, we had forests, vast tracts of forests. Many spirits dwelled in the forests. Now that the forests are gone, it is unlikely that it would happen. When there were many spirits, we could not break taboos.*

Seventeen-year-old Habib feels little connection to the spirits of the forests. He says:

*It is not instilled in us. Besides, there isn't much of a forest left anyway, just acres of oil palm plantation. I remember when the forests still surrounded our houses when I was young.*

Despite the loss of many traditional taboos, certain precautions are still followed, such as one prescribing that children are not to be scolded or teased to the point where they cry uncontrollably. Children are treated gently because many of the younger generations remember or heard of a dangerous storm which followed the breaking of the taboo about teasing children. Twenty-four-year-old Ann, great-granddaughter of the late village *bomoh* (shaman), was there when the storm happened:

*Piran, who was then a little boy, was playing with a frog, but then his uncle took the frog away from him. He started crying and was inconsolable. All of a sudden, out of nowhere, there was thunder. The sky became dark and it started to pour. Piran's mother quickly grabbed Piran and ran towards her house, but it was as if the lightning was trailing them from behind. They ran into a local shaman's house who quickly performed jampi [communication with the spirits]. At once, the rain stopped and the sky became clear and sunny again.*

Sanisah Dep, thirty-eight-year-old granddaughter of the late village *bomoh*, was also there:

*I was horrified by what I saw. It was like a storm, but it was different from the usual storms we have here. As she ran, it was as if a group of dark clouds was hovering over her, chasing her. The uncle was teasing the child, so it happened. Now whatever the children want, we try to give or we pacify the child immediately.*



In older times, there were *bomohs* who knew how to heal people, how to communicate with the spirits, and how to conduct the necessary rituals. But few of these elders are left. Sanisah lived next door to her grandfather, the village *bomoh*, and is certain that his death in 1997 was a result of his being unable to perform the obligatory ceremony to please the spirits:

*Grandfather was an old man, in his eighties. Even so, he was still very strong, and was as fit as a fiddle. He was the village head and shaman, and many people respected him and sought his advice and help. Then early in 1997 the forest surrounding our houses was cleared to make way for Phase 2 of the community oil palm plantation. He was very upset with the village committee for clearing the forest behind his house, as he had asked them to spare a small portion of the forest, for this was where he did the bela kampung ritual for the wellbeing of his family and the village. He warned them that if they cleared the area where he conducted the bela kampung, the spirits would be angry and there could be repercussions later on. No one listened to him and the forest was cleared and the oil palm planted.*

*About two to three months after that, Grandfather was still hale and hearty and called*



*all his grandchildren and great-grandchildren to a small feast in his house. All of a sudden, Grandfather gave a loud cry; he said that his head was very painful. I ran to get help. When I returned, I saw him sprawled on the floor of his house, his face tilted sideways, stiff. Unable to talk, he gestured to us to find his shaman tools so that he could perform jampi. We did not know where he kept them, as he never told us. Unable to help him, we rushed him to the hospital, about 40 kilometers away, but he died upon reaching it. The doctors told us that his kidneys were damaged. I am not convinced, as Grandfather was very healthy. This happened all of a sudden, shortly after failing to perform the bela kampung when the time was due.*

Now there is no *bomoh* left in Kampung Simpai. There is still a *bomoh* in a nearby village, however, and his help was called for in November 2006 when a twelve-year-old Jakun girl got dengue hemorrhagic fever. The doctors at the nearest hospital said there was little chance of her recovery. To save her, her family then took her to the *bomoh*. The girl recovered. She observed all traditional taboos until a special *putus ubat* ceremony was held for the whole extended family, to complete the healing and thank the spirits. Its climax was bathing of the girl and her father with coconut water mixed with water over which the *bomoh* had done *jampi*. In the photo shown here, the girl's maternal aunt is holding a *pelepas* made from coconut leaves, representing the suffering and disease that needed to be purged from the patient's body. The patient tore it into two, marking the end of her illness.

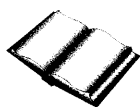
Though earlier generations lived with little chance for work, with even rice a luxury, some of the old people are nostalgic about the past. Abu says:

*We Orang Asli open up small portions of the forest for our swidden plots, say ten acres. But now the plantations have opened up thousands of acres of forest. It's so vast that one cannot see anything but oil palm. I remember hearing birds chirping and monkeys making funny noises. Our community was not only a community of people, but also of animals. We do miss the sounds of the animals in the morning. All we hear now is the rumbling of the lorries carrying the oil palm fruit.<sup>41</sup>*



land. So long as the Orang Asli live in the forests, especially if they were even granted land rights to their ancestral lands, the individual state governments cannot get access to the timber revenues. Critics think that this is why the government is making efforts to "integrate" the Orang Asli into Malay culture in the name of "development," including relocation, education, and Islamization, in order to detach them from their spiritual affinity to their land.

In the United States, reservations on which thousands of Navajos and Hopis were living were found to be sitting on the largest coal deposit in the country—the 4000-square-mile "Black Mesa." In 1966, the Navajo and Hopi tribal councils signed agreements allowing Black Mesa to be strip-mined by utility companies to provide electricity for southwestern cities, and, presumably, economic development for the tribes. Since then, the sacred land has been devastated, ancient archaeological sites have been destroyed, thousands of Navajos have been displaced, and aquifers are drying up as 1.3 billion gallons of pure water per year have been used to pump the coal slurry to a power plant hundreds of miles away. It is now thought that the government-established tribal councils—themselves not considered genuine representatives of the tribal peoples—were being advised by an attorney who was secretly employed by the coal company. The Black Mesa Trust is pressing for legal action that would pose limits on future damage to the area and curb pressure tactics being used against the indigenous people. Cherokee attorney Jace Weaver points out that there are difficulties in protecting the rights of indigenous people on religious grounds because the legal definition of "religion" is limited. He writes, "Lacking a concept of the holy, our legal system finally is incapable of comprehending Native religious freedom and land claims."<sup>42</sup>



Seeing with a Native  
Eye, p. 56  
BARRE TOELKEN

Modern development schemes—as well as outright plunder of natural resources for profit—are being called into question by land-based traditional peoples around the world, and attempts have begun to re-establish the validity of the ancient wisdom. In India, officials in the Ministry of Environment and Forests are now acknowledging that the remaining sacred groves of the indigenous people are treasure-houses of biodiversity and should not be destroyed. In such areas, it is often the shamans who teach the tribal people the importance of protecting the trees and vegetation.

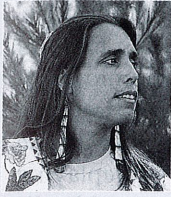
In northern Thailand, damage from rainy season floods and sedimentation was so severe in 1995 that villagers whose houses and fields had been destroyed revived an ancient indigenous ritual to apologize to the Mae Chaem River. Respectful relationships with the river had lapsed with the introduction of modern water control technologies, such as dams and irrigation projects. At dawn, in the rain, villagers made altars in the river, filling them with sweets, nuts, bananas, sugar cane, foods, and cigarettes as offerings to the spirits of the forest, the earth deities, and the guardian spirits of the river. In their prayers, the people asked forgiveness of the river for misuse of the water and requested that the water level be lowered.

Some indigenous people feel that their traditional sacred ways are not only valid, but actually essential for the future of the world. They see these understandings as antidotes to mechanistic, dehumanizing, environmentally destructive ways of life. Rather than regarding their ancient way as inferior, intact groups such as the Kogi of the high Colombian rainforest feel they are the elder brothers of



## Winona LaDuke

As the narrator of Winona LaDuke's semi-fictional novel, *Last Standing Woman*, puts it, her clanspeople have a special destiny:



*In times past, they were warriors, the ogichidaa, those who defended the people. Sometimes we still are. We are what we are intended to be when we have those three things that guide our direction—our name, our clan, and our religion.*<sup>43</sup>

Winona herself is a prime example. She is continually in the news as a fighter on behalf of the future of the earth and its disadvantaged peoples. When in 1996 she ran as the Green Party candidate for Vice-President of the United States, she campaigned for reforms oriented toward long-term survival:

*I am interested in reframing the debate on the issues of this society, the distribution of power and wealth, abuse of power, the rights of the natural world, the environment, and the need to consider an amendment to the U.S. Constitution in which all decisions made today would be considered in light of the impact on the seventh generation from now.*<sup>44</sup>

Winona now lives on her father's traditional tribal lands in northern Minnesota in the White Earth Reservation. Her father, like many, had left the reservation in search of economic opportunity and as a consequence of internal political oppression, but now Winona is trying to re-establish an economic base that will allow her Anishinaabe people to return to their land and to have the legal right to control its use. The land is of spiritual as well as economic importance to her people.

Part of the land on which Winona's Mississippi band of the Anishinaabe had long lived was formally granted to them by an 1867 treaty establishing a reservation of 837,000 acres, in exchange for their giving up their rights to most of Minnesota and Wisconsin. But over time, land slipped away through foreclosures, illegal land transfers, and a 1986 settlement in which Anishinaabe were forced to accept, under pressure from large government agencies and timber companies, sale of remaining lands for only pennies an acre. Now the White Earth Reservation occupies only about one-sixth of the original area. Using part of a \$20,000 Reebok

company award for her human rights work, Winona established the White Earth Land Recovery Project to begin to repurchase the land. She says, "We are going to recover our land acre by acre, inch by inch. Our burial grounds must be ours forever, even if we have to buy them back."<sup>45</sup>

The project she initiated has already repurchased over 1,300 acres of former tribal lands, and is trying to add more through further purchases, bequests, and legislation. The lands include burial grounds with undisturbed birch and sugar maple forests, and a 715-acre area encompassing two lakes, nesting sites for waterfowl, wild rice, and many medicinal plants. The latter area is earmarked to teach Anishinaabe children their own traditional cultural practices, and also to demonstrate to the world their value for planetary survival.

Winona, a Harvard-educated journalist, lives in a lakeside log cabin on the reservation with her two children, Ajuawak and Wasey, trying to teach them traditional beliefs. She has no fear of fighting against large-scale vested interests. In 1994, for instance, she chained herself to a paper company's gates to protest their clearance of forests including thousand-year-old trees to make phone books. As a result, she was put in jail for five hours but the publicity led other companies to cancel their contracts with that paper company.

She is now trying to help develop long-range plans for sustainable management of White Earth lands as ecosystems that, if restored, can provide medicines and materials for Anishinaabe traditional culture. The goal is to make it possible for people to return to the land. A tribal prophecy indicates that the people of the seventh fire—the current period—will look around and discover the things they had lost. With loss of the land had come loss of traditional spiritual principles. At the end of *Last Standing Woman*, the narrator speaks in the year 2018, describing her culture, which has rediscovered its spiritual traditions:

*To understand our relationship to the whole and our role on the path of life. We also understand our responsibility. We only take what we need, and we leave the rest. We always give thanks for what we are given. What carries us through is the relationship we have to the Creation and the courage we are able to gather from the experience of our aanikoobijigan, our ancestors, and our oshkaabewisag, our helpers.*<sup>46</sup>





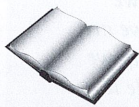
*Indigenous leaders from Siberia, Texas, and Mexico and a Sufi leader from Siberia on their way to a global gathering in Italy of indigenous elders to discuss planetwide problems.*

ed with the cycles of death and rebirth, and the movement of the sun, moon, and stars. The chance turn of the dice or wheel of fortune often appears in myths as a metaphor for balance in the continual shifts between happiness and sorrow. Gaming rituals were used by some tribes to help the movement of the seasons and the shifts between night and day, to influence the weather, to assist in hunting, and to restore health. Addictive gambling is a different matter, for it can be disastrous for individuals and their families.

In the 2000 United States census, over four million people said they were at least partly Native American, over twice as many as made that claim during the 1990 census. Why this striking movement toward adopting a previously stigmatized indigenous identity? Possible reasons include the potential for a share in the gambling revenues, scholarships for minority students, the new-found popularity of native spiritual traditions, and the search for roots. There is thus considerable tension over the issue of native credentials, complicated by centuries of intermarriages. Those who consider themselves authentically "Indian" call the newcomers "wannabes" or "pretendians."

While there is a longing for exclusiveness on the part of some elders, others are adopting modern technologies to bring international attention to and find support for their causes. Personal visions and ancient prophecies about the dangers of a lifestyle that ignores the earth and the spiritual dimensions of life are leading native elders around the world to gather internationally and raise their voices together. They assert indigenous spiritual insights and observations about the state of the planet, political matters, and contemporary lifestyle issues.

Indigenous elders who are now speaking out seek converts not to their path but to a respect for all of life, which they feel is essential for the harmony of the planet. A respected elder of the Hopi nation, the late Thomas Banyacya, made a stirring appeal to the United Nations in 1992, in which he explained Hopi prophecies about our times. According to the prophecies, the creator made a perfectly balanced world but when humans turned away from spiritual principles for selfish reasons, the world was destroyed by earthquakes. The few survivors developed the second world, but repeated their mistakes, and the world was destroyed by the Ice Age. The few people



Hopi Message, p. 58  
THOMAS BANYACYA



who survived spoke one language and developed high technologies but when they turned away from natural laws and spiritual principles, the third world was destroyed by a great flood which is remembered in the ancient stories of many peoples. Now we are living in the fourth world. According to Hopi time lines, we are in the final stages of decay. Showing a rock drawing of part of the Hopi prophecy, Thomas Banyacya explained:

*There are two paths. The first with high technology but separate from natural and spiritual law leads to these jagged lines representing chaos. The lower path is one that remains in harmony with natural law. Here we see a line that represents a choice like a bridge joining the paths. If we turn to spiritual harmony and live from our hearts we can experience a paradise in this world. If we continue only on this upper path, we will come to destruction.<sup>47</sup>*

*Many people have said that indigenous peoples are myths of the past, ruins that have died. But the indigenous community is not a vestige of the past, nor is it a myth. It is full of vitality and has a course and a future. It has much wisdom and richness to contribute. They have not killed us and they will not kill us now. We are stepping forth to say, "No, we are here. We live."*

*Rigoberta Menchú of the K'iché Maya<sup>48</sup>*

## Suggested reading

- Basso, Keith H., *Wisdom Sites in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996. Interesting first-person ethnographic study of the meanings that Apache people attach to their environment.
- Beck, Peggy V. and Anna L. Walters, *The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Sources of Life*, Tsaiile (Navajo Nation), Arizona: Navajo Community College Press, 1977. A fine and genuine survey of indigenous sacred ways, particularly those of North America.
- Bell, Diane, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, 2nd ed., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. A pioneering study of Australian aboriginal women, by an anthropologist who lived among them.
- Berger, Julian, *The Gaia Atlas of First Peoples: A Future for the Indigenous World*, New York: Anchor Books, 1990. An illustrated survey of contemporary survival issues facing the original inhabitants of many lands, with particular reference to threats to their environment from invading cultures.
- Brown, Joseph Epes, *The Sacred Pipe*, 1953, New York: Penguin Books, 1971. Detailed accounts of the sacred rites of the Oglala Sioux by Black Elk, a respected holy man.
- Eliade, Mircea, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, translated from the French by Willard Trask, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964. The first scholarly book to examine shamanism as an authentic religious form rather than as an anthropological oddity.
- Erdoes, Richard and Alfonso Ortiz, *American Indian Myths and Legends*, 1984, New York: Pantheon Books. A classic collection of stories from 80 North American tribes that offer a wealth of insights into traditional perceptions and lifeways.
- Ewen, Alexander, *Voice of Indigenous Peoples*, Santa Fe, New Mexico: Clear Light Publishers, 1994. Speeches and writings from indigenous speakers at the 1992 United



- Nations Human Rights Day, analyzing the political conditions facing indigenous peoples.
- Gill, Sam D., *Native American Religions*, Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1982. A sensitive academic survey of indigenous sacred ways in the United States.
- Goulet, Jean-Guy A., *Ways of Knowing: Experience, Knowledge, and Power among the Dene* Th. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. Honest attempt by an anthropologist directly experience and then explain to others the contemporary lifeways of the traditional people in northern Canada.
- Grim, John, ed., *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001. One of the excellent volumes of the series "Religions of the World and Ecology," this volume traces environmental themes across many different indigenous cultures.
- Halifax, Joan, *Shamanic Voices: A Survey of Visionary Narratives*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1979, and Harmondsworth, London: Penguin, 1980. First-hand accounts of shamanistic visionary experiences.
- Harvey, Graham, *Indigenous Religions: A Companion*, London and New York: 2000. Scholarly articles about specific cultures, attempting to transcend the tendency to understand indigenous religions in terms of concepts taken from other religions.
- Lame Deer, John and Richard Erdoes, *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*, New York: Pocket Books, 1976. First-hand accounts of the life of a rebel visionary who tried to maintain the old ways.
- Magesa, Laurenti, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997. An African Catholic theologian describes African traditional beliefs and practices as teachings about how to live meaningfully and harmoniously.
- Nelson, Richard K., *Make Prayers to the Raven: A Koyukon View of the Northern Forest*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. Careful explanations of the close interrelationships between people and the rest of the natural world among these people of the western Canadian forest and tundra.
- St. Pierre, Mark and Tilda Long Soldier, *Walking in the Sacred Manner*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995. First-person accounts of Plains Indian women's spiritual roles.
- Weaver, Jace, ed., *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998. A varied collection of essays examining facets of contemporary religious identities among Native Americans.
- Zuesse, Evan M., *Ritual Cosmos: The Sanctification of Life in African Religions*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979. A perceptive attempt to explain the essential difference between African traditional religions and Western monotheistic traditions, with detailed examples of African efforts to sanctify and find meaning in everyday life.

## Key terms

**cosmogony** A model of the origins of the universe.

**Dreaming (Dream Time)** The timeless time of Creation, according to Australian Aboriginal belief.

**indigenous** Native to an area.

**lifeway** An entire approach to living in which sacred and secular are not separate.

**medicine person** An indigenous healer.

**orisa** Yoruba term for a deity.

**shaman** A man or woman who has undergone spiritual ordeals and can communicate with the spirit world to help the people.

**vision quest** A solitary ordeal undertaken to seek spiritual guidance about one's mission in life.



## Review questions

1. How do indigenous sacred ways have an ecological perspective?
2. What effects do indigenous sacred ways' rituals seem to have, such as storytelling, drumming, initiations, healing, self-sacrifice, and vision quests?
3. What are some important effects of the clashes between indigenous and industrial societies?

## Discussion questions

1. Should and can indigenous sacred ways be reconciled with modern industrial/commercial pressures? If not, why? If so, what should be required on each side?
2. How should global religions relate to indigenous sacred ways?

## Internet resources

Aboriginal Studies WWW Virtual Library

<http://www.ciolek.com/WWWVL-Aboriginal.html>

Australian Indigenous Spirituality and Sacred Sites

<http://www.trinity.wa.edu.au/plduffyrc/indig/sites.htm>

Center for Orang Asli Concerns <http://www.coac.org.my>

Center for World Indigenous Studies <http://www.cwis.org/wwwvl/indig-vl.html>

Indians <http://www.indians.org/>

Isizoh, Chidi Denis, ed., "African Traditional Religion." <http://afrikaworld.net/afrel/>

Karenga, Maulana, ed., "Kwanzaa."

<http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/index.shtml>

Native Americans <http://www.nativeweb.org/>

Native Americans: The First People of America <http://www.nativeamericans.com/>

Native Peoples Magazine <http://www.nativepeoples.com/>