

RAINBOW

and the
BLUE MAN

THE

An article to honour
the passing of the
Oglala medicine man,
writer and teacher

Ed McGaa Eagle Man



Many of you reading this have sought a teacher to learn more about the 'Natural Way'. I think it is wise to let nature be the foremost teacher.

When choosing a two-legged teacher, I watch for someone who has courage and is willing to admit that they can be wrong or in error. One of the most profound abilities to be found in a fruitful teacher is their ability to admit that they do not know the answer to most of life's mysteries. You must decide if the knowledge they carry will be beneficial to your path. Above all, allow your teachers to be human and grant them the freedom to make their share of human mistakes.

Once I identify a possible teacher, I must determine whether the teacher is authentic.

It is important for you to test the teacher. Ask yourself a few questions: Do they want to control you or things in general? Are they loaded up with superstitions or strange rules that restrict sincere prayer and ceremony. Are they purposefully making the teaching difficult so that you will have to keep coming back to them? Are they warning you to avoid other people's ceremonies or other knowledge?

If their rules or procedures can be used in a practical way to restore harmony, then by all means

respect them. I know a teacher who is fairly strict, but underneath he emanates a deep harmony along with some very worthwhile wisdom.

The teachers I respect include some of my fellow Native Americans who have come forth to offer knowledge and their experiences. Over a half century ago, Nicholas Black Elk met with a white man to tell of his deep and powerful vision. Later, he sat with another non-Indian to expand upon the seven sacred ceremonies. These men were writers'. Black Elk intended that the knowledge of the Natural Way be preserved and

passed on for the benefit of all two-leggeds, tribal and non tribal.

Frank Fools Crow and Bill Eagle Feather, two venerable Sioux holy men who rebirthed the Sun Dance, followed Black Elk's example. Their ceremonies did not exclude anyone because of gender, colour or bloodline. Both holy men spoke out for unity and cooperation among the races of the four colours. These men were known for holding ceremony for the healing of Indians and non-Indians who sought their wisdom and counsel.

I would also honour my spirit guide from the world beyond whom I have come to know as Charging Shield. I regard his force or mystery as having allowed me numerous adventures and experiences in the 'Natural Way.' Charging Shield's spirit has also been a driving force behind my writing.

I also remember Plato's thought, "each of us has many teachers who alter the course of our lives. Some of these people may cross our lives for a moment and leave an indelible mark in our memories".

I want to make it clear that I do not regard myself as a medicine man, it's tough enough just being a writer, just having the courage to call a few spades, spades! I want to avoid living in a glass house and having people examine everything I do and I wouldn't care to put up with the jealousy that is always dropped on a medicine man, especially the successful ones.

I am just a two-legged who has made my share of mistakes in life, and I don't think that will change, I'll make more yet. I don't believe you have to be a holy man to acknowledge Great Spirit.

Many people these days place the patriarchal belief systems of the dominant culture into their interpretation of Mother Earth Spirituality. It is important to get back to basics and ask yourself daily, how can we keep a strong connection to the Earth and the sacred Four directions?

Setting your intention to getting back to nature is the key to living in harmony on the Mother Earth. The earliest Americans considered every day a spiritual association with nature, every step a connection to Great Spirit. The culmination of this association was ceremony.

Ceremony is a beseechment, thanks-giving, or acknowledgment to a higher power, a higher force. If you are a traditional Sioux Indian, ceremony is directed toward Wakan Tanka, the Great Spirit, the Great Mystery, the Great Unending Circle, through the Six Powers of the universe, the six powers that Black Elk's powerful vision describes.

The function of vision, ritual and perceiving intellect is to allow us to experience our spirituality here and now. We are a manifestation of the Six Powers physically, and they are clearly visible today and every day.

They are a direct manifestation of the Great Mystery and are contained in all life. Most Native Americans do not attempt to describe the Great Spirit. We believe it is rather foolish to attempt description of the Creator of time and space-things our two-legged mind cannot comprehend.

I practise the Mother Earth ceremonies as a natural part of my daily living. We use the sacred pipe in the seven sacred ceremonies².

Some of these ceremonies, including the Sun Dance and the Keeping of the Soul Ceremony, were banned by the U.S. government.

Unlike the ceremonies of the dominant culture in the Americas, Sioux ceremonies are very balanced. When a woman is present, it is she who will be the first to enter the Lodge.

A great deal of power and harmony manifest when a woman is allowed to take her equal place in ceremony. Probably more important, a great deal of wisdom is lost when a woman is not allowed her rightful voice in spiritual leadership.

We are seeing a significant rise in numbers of those who choose to participate in the international Sun Dance. This seems peculiar to me since the prayers we make are very old and require a deep commitment to the old ways.

I find it difficult to fault the respectful and well meaning use of objects for ceremonial purposes by a person who has a healthy respect for those objects and sincerely uses them to connect to the Great Spirit, and who is of course concerned about the health of our Mother Earth. I hope however that you will be respectful in the use of your ceremonial tools.

My teachers insist that to properly conduct ceremony, absolutely no alcohol or other chemicals were to be consumed, and this included the cactus bud called peyote. Bill Eagle Feather once told me, "We get our visions from our own juices." Both holy men I mentioned were total abstainers, and it is my strong recommendation that if you are considering taking a leadership role in ceremony, you abstain from all alcohol, drugs, or mind-altering substances.

For the novice wanting to bring the power of ceremony into your life, practise smudging yourself and making a simple beseechment to the four directions (or what some refer to as the Medicine Wheel).

Indian names, or natural names, are being sought after by many non-Indians. People are seeking a natural identity to become more aligned and related to the natural forces that flow in harmony. It is comforting to have a natural name. It is also a good feeling to have a stone, a stone that conveys a special meaning to you and has come to you in a special way.

Open your heart to the rising sun while holding your Wotai [sacred stone friend] stone and recognising that new knowledge can result from each new day is a form of ceremony. Your Wotai may be your teacher, protector and friend, a piece of our Mother Earth.

You may someday participate in a Sweat Lodge for purification, and in time a Vision Quest for one's lone beseechment.

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It is my belief that spiritually balanced people with good intentions should be welcomed to conduct ceremony, and that they should not be fearful. I think it is better for this ailing world that non-Indians have the opportunity to experience these ways since it will make them a better people. That is how powerful these ceremonies are and we do not have much environmental time to be arguing over who may participate in ceremony.

You must remember by living the Natural Way, the Native Americans lived in environmental tranquillity and in an intrinsic relationship with nature as dependent servants - not polluting, self-destructing masters.

Unchecked industrial growth has caused perilous pollution, massive over-population and has changed all of that for the inhabitants of Mother Earth. The red people had no need to consider changing their nature-based system. Their land was kept pure and clean. It was productive and had a balanced population.

History shows that my people were kind and generous peoples. We kept the Pilgrims alive and sheltered the runaway black slaves. We even taught the Pilgrims Thanksgiving and how to plant and fertilise the right way. These people did not place price tags on spiritual gifts and their expressions of gratitude could not be bought by the dominant culture.

far in the modern world to see the consequences of amoral leadership.

Although a person may be able to get away with his schemes and untruths, in the spirit world truth won't be bought or sold and memory will be for an eternity. Natural justice will wreak its balance. It is said that in the very early days, lying was a capital offense among us. Believing that the deliberate liar is capable of committing any crime behind the scene of cowardly untruth and double dealing, the destroyer of mutual confidence was put to death.

We don't have to look far to see the Blue Man in the tobacco industry, or the self-serving politicians who protected their secrets.

But we must not lose sight of those people who have integrity. Amongst those I have come to know are the rainbow people described in my book *Rainbow Tribe*.

The rainbow is a symbol of the Great Spirit and the many colours, ways, and races unifying. Nicholas Black Elk said the Rainbow people (Lakota: *Wigmunke oyate*) would become the spreading flames for a unifying force of good. The rainbow symbolises fresh spirit life, and from the rainbow little flames of knowledge fall. Where they land, flowers grow.

The rainbows are searching to bring forth that ancient tribal gene link that cultivates an innate

200,000 years ago and suggest a nature-deity connection may have existed between the British Isles and the Western shores of the Atlantic. I have observed a deep respect for the Mother, (Lakota: *Ina Maka*), by the Rainbow people.

They are opening new freedoms for the female and are ahead of many of their modern Native American counterparts, who I suspect have been unconsciously influenced by the patriarchy of the missionaries.

Could the matriarchal respect being shown by the Rainbows be a reaching back to the best facets of the Druidic spirituality that obviously held a powerful connection to the Creator endowed extension of the natural entities?

My personal lineage continues to draw me back to the British Isles. A few years ago, I had dinner with Phillip Carr-Gomm, chief of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids. I discovered there were many startling similarities between Native American and Druid teachings and practice. The Spirit of the Circle, the Spirit of the Stones, and related stone circle (medicine wheel) ceremonies suggest a possible common past.

Like the Native Americans, both the Celts and the Druids practise teaching in the oral traditions. Bards keep the identity and history alive for their people, creating a communal imagination that weaves together threads of the past, present and future. Had the Celtic tribes endured the political tides, even if continued on some kind of reservation system as were the native North Americans, then a vast reservoir of natural, connecting knowledge would have been available in our time.

Unfortunately, the modern two-leggeds of European lineage, the Romans and the English Kings, the 'anti-Mothers', destroyed the truthful records of the Celtic Earth Knowledge. I am among the many who walk amongst the stone circles looking for clues of a people and way of life which is pure.

In part, my own interest in the Celtic traditions draws from my bloodline. I am part Scotch-Irish, almost as much as I am Native American. It certainly is a nature based combination. I am not a full-blood, nor do I claim a famous

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The 'Blue Man' of Nicholas Black Elk's vision ³ is seen as a symbol of those who have harmed Mother Earth and all her creatures.

The Blue Man, the great violator, symbolises greed, corruption, dishonesty and selfishness. Mother Earth, represented by the four directions, has fought back against the one who has made the grass and animals sick and the streams and air unclean.

I see the Blue Man as an untruthful, greedy and destructive being. Lying is a part of their customs. We don't have to look very

spiritual consciousness, a natural flowing guidance that led native peoples to personal and collective enjoyment for thousands of years. These enlightened ones are the Rainbow Tribe, a person who allows nature to touch into his or her own inner source of wisdom - one's own heart. Their passion has led to an international resurgence of the Sun Dance ⁴.

There is a strong relationship between the 'matriarchal' Rainbow Tribe and the Celtic people. Some historians and archaeologists believe the Bering land bridge existed

chief as an ancestor. There are many non-Indians with no traceable Native American lineage who declare all sorts of relationships with past tribes. Do not be untruthful to yourself. You are what you are and I am what I am. People are people, and almost everyone in the world is a mixture. I understand it makes for healthier genes.

There are many Rainbows who believe they once lived as Native Americans. I cannot discredit their reincarnation theory, but neither can I substantiate it. This subject is definitely a mystery, but I have found little supportive evidence to verify such things. The most important gift we have in life is 'this day' and the opportunity to be with those we love one more day. Relationship is at the heart of all 'Mother Earth' ceremonies and beseechment.

After these pages, I hope you will keep your present vision and simply go your own path strengthened in a deeper respect and understanding for our Mother Earth. It is certain that Great Spirit is at work in all of this and I'm sure it's all much larger than any of us are able to imagine.

This article was presented to answer the questions I am most

asked when teaching.
I dedicate it to all my relations...
Mitakuye Oyasin!

Ed Mc Gaa, Eagle Man, was born on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and was a Ogala Sioux lawyer, writer, and lecturer who introduced thousands to Native American spirituality, ceremonies and rituals. He served in the US. Marines in Korea a fighter pilot, flying 110 combat missions, receiving eight Air Medals and two Crosses of Gallantry, and was recommended for a Distinguished Flying Cross.

His two best known books are : 'Mother Earth Spirituality, Native American Paths to Healing Ourselves and Our World,' Harper San Francisco, 1990. 'Rainbow Tribe, Ordinary People Journeying on the Red Road,' Harper San Francisco, 1992.

Ed McGaa passed into Spirit, aged 81, on August 25th 2017. This article - which first appeared in Sacred Hoop Issue 18 - is reprinted here again in memory of him.

NOTES:

1: Black Elk Speaks by John Neihardt (Publishing details unavailable at the time of this article). The Sacred Pipe by Joseph Epes Brown. University of Oklahoma Press ISBN 0-8061-2124-6.

2: The seven sacred ceremonies of the Sioux are the Sweat Lodge, the Vision Quest, the Sundance, the making of relatives, the keeping of the Soul, the womanhood ceremony, and the throwing of the ball. These ceremonies are described in detail in the Sacred Pipe by Joseph Epes Brown, and also are covered

in Mother Earth Spirituality By Ed McGaa.

3: The 'Blue Man' was part of Black Elk's vision and can be found in Black Elk Speaks by John Neihardt.

4: See the feature on the Sundance in Sacred Hoop issue 17.

The Blue Man - the great violator - symbolises greed, corruption, dishonesty and selfishness. Mother Earth has fought back against the one who has made the grass and animals sick and the streams and air unclean. The Blue Man is an untruthful, greedy and destructive being. Lying is a part of his customs. We don't have to look very far in the modern world to see the consequences of amoral leadership - the Blue Man in the self-serving politicians who protected their secrets. Natural justice will wreak its balance

