

Gregory Cajete, "Look to the Mountain: Reflections on Indigenous Ecology," in May, *Applied Ethics*, 3rd Ed., 2002, pp. 148-157.

Cajete describes the importance of the geography of the Americas in native American worldviews. The relationship to the place(s) of their ancestors, to the animal and plant worlds is central to the sense of the sacred in these cultures. The expression "Look to the mountains" reminds native Americans to think of the long-range impact on future generations when deciding what to do. Materialist modern ways often fail to take the long-range impact into account.

The Pueblo theology of place is "the complex of relationship, symbolism, attitude, and way of interacting with the land." The expression "that place that the People talk about" refers not only to a physical place but also a spiritual place. One's environment is not simply a passive object; it is alive and dynamic. Each person belongs to a place, and it is the place that makes people what they are.

Hunting and planting are viewed as part of the transformation of nature. The "hunter of good heart" is one who brings life to his people. This requires an intimate understanding of the animal and a knowledge of the animal's importance in the ecological cycle. An animal's life is sacrificed to continue human life. The hunter of good heart teaches that humans repay animals through the death of their own flesh for the purpose of perpetuating animal life.

Much philosophy of indigenous peoples is passed on through story and proverb. A story that relates how the cricket and the hare tricked the opossum into shaving his tail--believing it would make him more beautiful--"is a reflection on how people can get carried away by egotistical desires." The Pueblo proverb, "We are all kernels on the same cob of corn," expresses the commonality of all people.

In a "post-modern" world, many indigenous people have experienced a split or schizophrenic existence. Problems with alcoholism, suicide, and abuse of self and others reflect the anxiety that comes from the cultural split between ancient and modern ways. Indigenous artists have depicted this division or paranoia. The re-learning of the ecological ways of indigenous peoples is an avenue to overcoming this split in the psyche of people mired in materialist pursuits.