

## Communities as both Ecological and Social Entities in Native American Thought

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Community is a concept that has a number of meanings or interpretations. The most commonly used definition in contemporary American society is "a group of humans residing in the same locality and under the same government" (*Webster's* 1988). Communities may also be defined as a group or class having a common identity, or as sharing a likeness or interest. This can be considered as the social or political concept.

There is also a definition which is referred to as ecological, i.e. "a group of plants and animals living in a particular region under more or less similar conditions." (*Webster's* 1988). A more sophisticated definition of an ecological community provided by the ecologist Robert Ricklefs is "an association of interacting populations, usually defined by the nature of their interaction or by the place in which they live."<sup>1</sup> It is clear that under the Western scientific tradition the concept of an ecological community, i.e. an interacting assemblage of species, is kept distinct from the concept of a social or political community consisting entirely of human beings that is the preeminent meaning of this term in Euro-American cultural traditions.<sup>2</sup>

My goal is to introduce or return the reader to an earlier definition of community, one in which human beings are considered to be part of ecological communities and non-humans are considered to be part of social communities. In the cultural traditions of the indigenous peoples of North and South America, the distinction between social and ecological communities is not clearly delineated, and humans regularly have had social interactions and maintained social relationships with plants, animals, and features of the landscape.

This alternate way of conceiving the meaning of community does not arise because indigenous peoples fail to recognize human social communities, but results from 1) a different concept of what constitutes "personhood,"<sup>3</sup> and 2) a tendency to be place or locality oriented such that non-human entities that occur in the same ecological area are considered to be more closely related in a functional sense than are unfamiliar human beings.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert E. Ricklefs, *Ecology* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1990) and *The Economy of Nature: A Textbook of Basic Ecology* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., "Knowing and Understanding: Traditional Education in the Modern World," *Winds of Change* 5, no.1 (1990): 12; Raymond Pierotti and Daniel Wildcat, "Traditional Ecological Knowledge: The Third Alternative," *Ecological Applications* 10 (2000): 1333.

<sup>3</sup> Pierotti and Wildcat, "Traditional."

One important reason for these differences in philosophy is that Native peoples lack an immigrant experience within their memories. Native stories do not deal with the exact time when “historical” events occurred, since many such events happened so long ago that they exist “on the other side of memory.”<sup>5</sup> The exact locality where these events occurred is of paramount importance, however, and this sense of locality is what ties indigenous peoples to their local community in both the social and ecological sense.

The worldviews and cultures of Native American peoples evolved in the environments of the continents of North and South America, which means that these peoples came to depend upon the animals and plants of these environments for food, clothing, shelter, and, perhaps most importantly, social companionship. Identification with local plants and animals led to the development of strong ties to these non-human lives. As Vine Deloria Jr. notes, “Little emphasized, but equally as important for the formation of (Native) personality was the group of other forms of life which had come down over the centuries as part of the larger family.”<sup>6</sup>

The body of knowledge acquired through this connection to local non-humans and the careful observation of these other species came to constitute much of what Native Americans regard as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). One major theme that emerges from this knowledge is that all things are connected. Thus, the indigenous knowledge base emerges from an association of interacting populations, which relates conceptually to the Western discipline of an ecological community as defined above. It is clear that humans are an integral part of such a community, and that interactions between humans and non-humans can be as significant as those among human beings.

Native peoples do not think of the non-human elements of their community as constituting “nature” or as “wilderness,” but as part of their social environment. Native Americans who adhere to this philosophy do not think of leaving their “house” to “go into nature,” but instead feel that when they leave their shelter and encounter non-humans and natural physical features that they are just moving into other parts of their home. According to Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff,

What we call nature is conceived by Native peoples as an extension of biological man, therefore a [Native] never feels “surrounded by nature.” A [Native] walking in the forest ... is not in nature, but is entirely surrounded by cultural meanings his tradition has given to his external surroundings.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., “The Spatial Problem of History” in *God is Red* (Golden, Colorado: North American Press, 1992), 114; Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995); Pierotti and Wildcat, “Traditional.”

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Marshall, III, *On Behalf of the Wolf and the First Peoples* (Santa Fe: Red Crane Books, 1995), 207; Pierotti and Wildcat, “Traditional.”

<sup>6</sup> Deloria, “Knowing.”

The implications of such relationships are profound, as non-human elements are incorporated into the ritual representation of the community, establishing a nature-centered belief system.<sup>8</sup>

### Community Membership and the Concept of "Person"

In a traditional indigenous community, the linked concepts of the importance of the local place in determining traditions, connectedness to non-humans, and of nature as home rather than as "other" have profound implications for Native conceptions of politics and ethics. Unlike dominant Western political and ethical paradigms which find knowledge of how human beings ought to act imbedded in the life of one's social, (i.e. human) relationships, Native Americans found within their concept of community instructions concerning how a person should behave as a member of a community consisting of many non-human persons, for example, four-legged ones, winged-ones, plants, and even landforms.<sup>9</sup>

Western thought has traditionally followed the lead of Aristotle, and defined politics and ethics as exclusively human realms. Aristotle proposed that human values are learned from our fellow community members. Thus values, ethics, and politics exclude all but human beings, and respect and concern for their good are not owed to non-humans and landforms. From the traditional indigenous perspective, Aristotle's basic reasoning was right, but his notion of community membership was wrong. In indigenous communities politics and ethics exist in the realm of ecosystems, and politics and ethics are not limited only to human beings.<sup>10</sup>

The inclusion of other living beings and natural objects into the category of "persons," which includes human beings, requires the development of politics and ethics that includes these other community members.<sup>11</sup> Consideration of non-human entities,

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<sup>7</sup> Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, *The Forest Within: the World View of the Tukano Amazonian Indians*, (Tulsa: Council Oak Books, 1996), 8-9.

<sup>8</sup> Dennis Martinez, "Traditional Environmental Knowledge Connects Land and Culture," *Winds of Change* 9, no. 4 (1994): 89; Basso, *Wisdom*; Louis Owens, *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 218.

<sup>9</sup> Deloria, "Knowing"; Deloria, *Spatial*; Raymond Pierotti and Daniel Wildcat, "The Science of Ecology and Native American Traditions," *Winds of Change* 12, no. 4 (1997): 94; Raymond Pierotti and Daniel Wildcat, "Being Native to this Place in *American Indians in History, 1870-2000*," ed. S. Evans (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Calvin, Luther Martin. *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Enrique Salmon, "Kincentric Ecology: Indigenous Perceptions of the Human-Nature Relationship," *Ecological Applications* 10 (2000): 1327.

<sup>11</sup> Calvin Luther Martin, *The Way of the Human Being* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

including landforms, plants, and animals as individual persons and part of their communities keeps humans attending to these specific entities and their particular good.<sup>12</sup> Such beliefs lead to what has been described as “kincentric” ecology in which humans and nonhumans are viewed as part of an ecological assemblage that is treated as an extended family that shares ancestry and origins.<sup>13</sup>

One illustration of how Native peoples include other living beings as members of their community can be observed in clan names and totems, which indicate the existence of covenants between certain human families and specific animals.<sup>14</sup> These non-humans are connected to families over prolonged periods of time, and offer their assistance and guidance during each generation of humans.<sup>15</sup> Throughout Native American cultures, there is a broad commonality of beliefs about animals in which human and non-human are bonded closely and form part of one community involved with one another in terms of empowerment and emotional interactions.<sup>16</sup>

This relationship is more profound than most people can imagine, and the implications of this relationship carry consequences that might make adherents to the dominant culture uneasy or uncomfortable. To be a member of Eagle, Wolf, Bear, Deer, or even Wasp clan means that you are kin to these other persons; they are your relations. Ecological connectedness is culturally and ceremonially acknowledged through clan names, totems, and ceremonies.<sup>17</sup> In nearly all Native American stories, animal and plant persons existed before human-persons.<sup>18</sup> Thus, these kin exist as our elders and, much as do human elders, they function as teachers and respected members of the community. Acknowledging non-humans as teachers and elders requires that their lives merit special attention and consideration. It is also crucial to recognize that the lives of these non-human persons have meaning on their own terms, and do not exist solely in terms of their utility to humans.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Salmon, “Kincentric.”

<sup>14</sup> Deloria, “Knowing”; Raymond Pierotti and Daniel Wildcat, “Evolution, Creation, and Native Traditions,” *Winds of Change* 12, no. 2 (1997): 73.

<sup>15</sup> Martin, *Way*; Pierotti and Wildcat, “Traditional.”

<sup>16</sup> Martin, *Way*; Deloria, “Knowing”; Martinez, “Traditional”; Eugene N. Anderson, *Ecologies of the Heart: Emotion, Belief, and the Environment* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Martin, *Way*; Pierotti and Wildcat, “Evolution.”

<sup>18</sup> Pierotti and Wildcat, “Evolution.”

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, *Respect*.

This recognition of the value and meaning of non-human lives extends the social world to include non-humans as well as humans. This generates an ethical system that requires proper treatment of the non-human. Humans live in mutual aid relationships with nonhumans. If humans eat or otherwise use non-humans, they are empowered by that relationship, which leads to mutual respect. Many non-humans had powers far beyond the capabilities of ordinary humans and were able to move with ease through worlds impassable to humans.<sup>20</sup> For example, birds move through the air, which is off limits to most humans, and fish and marine mammals move through water in a manner that humans can only imitate in a clumsy fashion.

If non-humans are "persons," they should also be assumed to have some cognitive abilities, which would mean that they should recognize the danger of being hunted by humans. Thus, if a non-human is caught, it was also assumed to involve some element of choice on their part,<sup>21</sup> hence the concept of the prey "giving itself to you." This presumed gift required gratitude (thanks), as well as respectful treatment of the body of the nonhuman on the part of the human taking its life.<sup>22</sup>

The key point to understanding TEK is to realize that indigenous Americans integrated spiritual and ecological knowledge and understanding, blending these into a traditional way of life which allowed people to survive over extended periods of time under ecological conditions that were continuously fluctuating and relatively unpredictable without the use of pesticides, herds of domestic animals, and large-scale agriculture. Another trap here is the Western scientific assumption of a "balance of nature," whereby ecosystems, ecological communities, and animal populations exist under equilibrium conditions, to which they are inclined to return any time they experience any perturbation. This concept underlies all ecological models in population biology, including the most pernicious of them all, "maximum sustainable yield," the fundamental model for determining appropriate levels of "exploitation" in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology.

### **Spiritual Development in Relation to Community**

The attitudes and relationships of Native people to other organisms result from having evolved as distinct cultures in strong association with those other creatures, and experiencing them on a daily basis.<sup>23</sup> To Native peoples, relationships with the non-human and human world are the basis of their religion or spiritual belief system, and thus religion serves to code knowledge about community dynamics.<sup>24</sup> This religion provides

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<sup>20</sup> Anderson, *Ecologies*.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Adrian Tanner, *Bringing Home Animals* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1979); Marshall, *Behalf*.

<sup>23</sup> Martin, *Keepers*; Martin, *Way*; Pierotti and Wildcat, "Traditional."

direct emotional involvement with the non-human world. For example, Laguna Pueblo people could not have survived in the arid Southwestern US without their recognition that they were "sisters and brothers to badger, antelope, clay, yucca, and sun."<sup>25</sup> Similarly, to Northwest Coast peoples,

Fish, bears, wolves, and eagles were part of the kinship system, part of the community, part of the family structure. Modern urbanite ecologists see these as Other, and romanticize them, but for a Northwest Coast Indian, an alien human was more Other than a local octopus or wolf.<sup>26</sup>

The Raramuri (Tarahumara) people of northern Mexico use the term *iwigara* to indicate the way in which they are bound to the land, animals, and winds of their Sierra Madre home. *Iwigara* indicates the interconnectedness and integration of all life in the Sierra Madres, both physical and spiritual.<sup>27</sup>

Adherents to this concept of community recognize that non-humans existed before humans did. To Silko's Laguna people, emergence into this world was possible because of help from badger and antelope. In Comanche tradition wolf was the creator who taught humans how to hunt and how to live in the world.<sup>28</sup> In Rock Cree cosmogony, animals were recognized to have existed before human beings, and humans were known to come from animals during the progression of the earth.<sup>29</sup> The Oglala Lakota believe that "Sungmanitu Tanka Oyate, (powerful big dog people or wolves), were a nation long before human beings realized and declared themselves a nation."<sup>30</sup>

Recognition of this connection between human and non-humans leads also to the concept that all things are related, which is central to indigenous spiritual beliefs. Related concepts are less than 150 years old in Western science. Darwin's (1859) demonstration that humans must have evolved from non-human ancestors was such a revolutionary concept because it ran counter to prevailing Western philosophy from Aristotle to Kant

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<sup>24</sup> Roy A. Rappaport, "The Sacred in Human Evolution," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 2 (1971): 23; Deloria, "Spatial"; Anderson, *Ecologies*.

<sup>25</sup> Leslie M. Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> Anderson, *Ecologies*, 66.

<sup>27</sup> Salmon, "Kincentric."

<sup>28</sup> Gavin Buller, "Comanche and Coyote, the Culture Maker," in *Smoothing the Ground*, ed. B. Swann (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993), 245.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Brightman, *Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human-Animal Relationships* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> Manuel Iron Cloud cited in *War Against the Wolf: America's Campaign to Exterminate the Wolf*, ed. Robert McIntyre (Stillwater, Minnesota: Voyageur Press, 1995).

that separated humans from the rest of nature. Perhaps the most important consequence of Charles Darwin's theory of common descent was its change in the position of humans from separate from nature to part of nature,<sup>31</sup> and this theory served to establish in Western thought the tenet that humans are related to non-humans and linked to them through community dynamics.

Often unrecognized is the fact that not only are humans dependent upon the non-human, but also the reverse is often true. Activities of humans are often important in shaping the lives and ecology of the non-human elements of their communities. Burning practices of indigenous peoples of both North America and Australia had major effects on local plant community structure and led both to increased biodiversity and increased population size of many important species.<sup>32</sup> Buffalo depended upon humans who burned the prairie, especially the tall grass prairies, to maintain an ecosystem that allowed the buffalo to exist in such large numbers. In contrast, both Western science and popular culture consider "wildfires" to be both "highly disruptive and environmentally destructive," and only very recently has Western science come to realize the value of fire as an important component structuring ecological communities.

One important feature of including non-humans as community members is that it allowed Native Americans to identify with and respect predators, since they knew how difficult it is to take the lives of other individuals.<sup>33</sup> It is important to keep in mind that the guardians of the four directions in Zuni beliefs are all predators: wolf (east), badger (south), bear (west), cougar (north). Predators are also represented as clan totems much more often than non-predators, e.g. eagle, bear, wolf, orca, weasel, fox. In this intellectual and spiritual tradition it is recognized that predation is not an activity that involves hostile intent, and that predators may feel strongly connected to the prey when they have taken its life.<sup>34</sup>

As an example of the nature of such relationships, one particular predator was of great cultural and spiritual significance to many Native peoples, such as Comanche, Shoshone, Blackfeet, and Lakota.<sup>35</sup> This was the wolf, *Canis lupus*, which was found throughout North America, lived in family groups, and was not strong or swift enough to

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<sup>31</sup> Ernst Mayr, *This is Biology: the Science of the Living World* (London: Belknap Press, 1997), 182.

<sup>32</sup> Henry T. Lewis, "A Parable of Fire: Hunter Gatherers in Canada and Australia," in *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: a Collection of Essays*, ed. R. E. Johannes (Cambridge: International Union for the Conservation of Nature 1989), 7.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Marshall-Thomas, *The Tribe of Tiger: Cats and Their Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994); Tanner, *Bringing*; Brightman, *Grateful*; Marshall, *Behalf*.

<sup>34</sup> Marshall-Thomas, *The Tribe*.

<sup>35</sup> Russel Barsh, "Forests, Indigenous Peoples, and Biodiversity," *Global Biodiversity* (Canadian Museum of Nature) 7, no. 2 (1997): 2; Buller, "Comanche"; Marshall, *Behalf*; McIntyre, *War*.

kill large prey alone. Wolves working cooperatively as a group, however, could bring down even large plant eaters. Thus they served as models for the concepts of community existing at both the single species and ecosystem level. Like humans, wolves associated with and maintained cordial relations with other species such as ravens. It has recently been shown that when wolves are absent, ravens are much more nervous around the body of an elk or deer than when wolves are present.<sup>36</sup>

The weapons of wolves were “formidable, but the first people saw that they were of little use without endurance, patience and perseverance...qualities the first peoples could develop in themselves.”<sup>37</sup> It appears that several peoples felt their connection to wolves was strong because wolves even instructed them in methods of hunting. More important, however, was that if people were to emulate the wolf, like the wolf they also had to exist to serve their own social community and the local ecological community: “Understanding this reality made them truly of the earth, because every life ultimately gives itself back to the earth.”<sup>38</sup>

### **Enlightenment, Boarding Schools, Alcohol, and Fear**

As Kirkpatrick Sale has observed, the Western cultural tradition has made a major effort to separate itself from any association with the natural world, except as a source of resources for exploitation.<sup>39</sup> In particular, various sects of Christianity developed a philosophical tradition which “offered no encouragement for any investigation into the foreordained ways of God’s creatures, much less the established workings of his trees and rivers and soils...it was sufficient for them to know that God created them, blessed them, and then gave humans ‘dominion’ over them.” This attitude was the result of a long tradition, where “Earth is full of restless dread throughout her woods, her mighty mountains and deep forests.”<sup>40</sup>

Mountains were places of dread and “regarded as physically unattractive,” and “early modern travelers found mountainous country unpleasant and dangerous.” Forests were worse, because of an imagined bestiary (including werewolves, vampires, and Pan, the goat-legged god of the woods, and source of the word *panic*) that inhabited these areas, “but forests and mountains need not be populated to be fearsome. It was enough that these places were wild: that was the trigger to the terror.” The wild was “so

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<sup>36</sup> Bernd Heinrich, *Mind of the Raven: Investigations and Adventures with Wolf Birds* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2000).

<sup>37</sup> Marshall, *Behalf*, 6.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>39</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-78.



unreasonably fearsome that the encroachment of wild creatures into the human domain was always alarming." A bee flying into a cottage or a bird rapping at the window was enough to send strong men to bed, and the English House of Commons rejected a bill in 1604 because a jackdaw flew through the chamber during the speech of its sponsor.<sup>41</sup> (As I write these words NBC is leading off its report of world news with a stories of shark attacks along the Atlantic coast, which uses terminology such as "vicious" and "unprovoked" that demonstrate that contemporary Western society has changed little in its attitudes over the past 400 years.)

These traditions were emphasized and strengthened by the Renaissance of the 14th and 15th centuries, which emphasized absolute human autonomy.<sup>42</sup> The 17th-century scientific revolution did little to change this scenario, in fact, it actually made the situation worse by "transforming nature from a living organism into a machine – simple, unfeeling, inert matter with no intelligence, soul, or purpose – the new mechanistic philosophy assisted the commodification of nature." The 18th-century so-called "Enlightenment" stressed humans as master of their own destinies, and emphasized the subjugation of nature.<sup>43</sup> It must be emphasized that the Europeans who settled in North America during the 17th and 18th centuries were disciples of this cultural, philosophical, and intellectual tradition.

Given this tradition, it is not surprising that as Europeans came to the Americas they regarded the "wilderness" as threatening and hostile. Even the earliest explorers regarded America as a land full of uncontrolled and frightening peoples and animals.<sup>44</sup> The reverend David Jones, who spent time living with the Shawnee in the 1770's, described the experience as "like living with lions."<sup>45</sup> Once Europeans learned of the philosophical and spiritual traditions of the indigenous peoples, they felt compelled to regard these beliefs as "primitive and savage" because these belief systems emphasized ties to nature or the wild that filled Europeans with fear.<sup>46</sup> Since the time of European contact, especially from the late 18th though the early 20th centuries, there have been consistent attempts by the dominant culture to destroy the notion of ecological communities as extended families and humans as connected to the non-human world.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes Since Ancient Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 68

<sup>44</sup> Martin, *Way*.

<sup>45</sup> Bil Gilbert, *God Gave us this Country: Tekamthi and the First American Civil War* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989).

<sup>46</sup> Martin, *Way*.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid; Deloria, "Spatial."

Much of this effort was conducted by removing many peoples from the places where they developed and evolved their cultural traditions and belief systems through "relocation." In addition, missionaries and other Christian proselytizers worked hard to convert "savages" away from their primitive belief systems and to indoctrinate these peoples into various Christian faiths. In addition, trading practices of Europeans combined with the introduction of new diseases may have served to disrupt the bonds that existed between indigenous peoples and their non-human relatives.<sup>48</sup>

Another way in which tribal communities have been disrupted and their bonds to their non-human relatives have been broken is through the "education" system of the European tradition. The formal education of the indigenous peoples of North America began with the European drive to colonize the continent. By 1611, French Jesuit missionaries had opened schools along the St. Lawrence River to pursue Louis XIV's edict that where possible native resistance to French rule should be neutralized by implementation of a program to educate the children of the Indians in the French manner.<sup>49</sup> This was the beginning of the boarding school education system, in which students were removed from their parents so that they could be forcibly educated in the traditions of the dominant culture.

Although the harmful aspects of this system of education have been extensively documented,<sup>50</sup> it is not often acknowledged that one major impact of this system was the separation of Native children from their connections with the natural world. As this effort progressed, it led many contemporary indigenous peoples away from traditional values and knowledge, and had destructive effects on indigenous communities. Among the casualties was the relationship with the non-human aspects of their social systems, which had already undergone massive impact from over-hunting and habitat destruction as Europeans invaded North America.<sup>51</sup>

One impact of this "education" has been the loss of important relationships between indigenous peoples and their non-human relatives. At the same time there has been a loss of a sense of place, which has been reinforced by attempts at "relocation," assimilation, and even termination.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Martin, *Keepers*.

<sup>49</sup> Juan Noriega, "American Indian Education in the United States: Indoctrination for Subordination to Colonialism," in *The State of Native America*, ed. M.A. Jaimes (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 371.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Dunlap, *Saving America's Wildlife* (Princeton: Princeton University 1988); Martin, *Keepers*; Martin, *Way*.

<sup>52</sup> Ward Churchill and G.T. Morris, *Key Indian Laws and Cases in The State of Native America*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 13.

One striking example of this loss of connection was a study conducted among Salishan peoples in the early 1990s about the reintroduction of wolves into Northern Washington. Older people over 60 years of age indicated fondness for wolves and felt a sense of connection to these predators. People between 30 and 60 indicated indifference, but felt that wolves were potentially harmful. People under 30, however, feared wolves and indicated that they disliked these animals and would shoot them on sight.<sup>53</sup> This indicates the level of indoctrination and assimilation of Native youth, even in communities where elders are present and hold very different views.

For too long Native Americans have allowed themselves to become obsessed with the values and attitudes of the dominant culture. It is clear, however, that the dominant culture is in trouble, and it is justifiably feared by our non-human relatives. What is even more sad, however, is that our human relatives have learned to fear us as well, because we have learned to think and act like Europeans. For Native American peoples to truly restore themselves and their communities as anything more than pale copies of the dominant culture, it is clear that we must re-establish meaningful contact with the non-human elements of our communities. This means developing and showing respect for the places in which we live, and the non-humans who share these places with us. They are willing to share, as indicated by their desperate attempts to hang on in these places despite hatred and persecution.<sup>54</sup> Environmental philosopher Wes Jackson has written an essay "Becoming Native to this Place,"<sup>55</sup> which is an instruction manual for people of European descent to establish ties and respect with nature, because he feels this is the only way to a viable future. It would be truly ironic if Native Americans who are truly "native to this place" forget these relationships with the other members of our communities at the same time Europeans are striving to develop such relationships.

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<sup>53</sup> Pierotti and Wildcat, "Science."

<sup>54</sup> Dunlap, *Saving*; Marshall-Thomas, *Tribe*.

<sup>55</sup> Wes Jackson, *Becoming Native to this Place* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1994).