



AND IT IS STILL THAT WAY ...

Nez Perce National Historical Park
National Park Service

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AT NEZ PERCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

The National Park Service has developed a National Education Task Force to encourage individual parks to develop site specific curriculum based programs. In keeping with this, Nez Perce National Historical Park has developed the following booklet. It is hoped that this will form a partnership between the Park Service and the area schools and other organizations.

Nez Perce National Historical Park offers a unique opportunity for students to learn about the Nez Perce culture. The booklet is to help educators prepare their students for an on-site visit to the park and continue back in the classroom with post-visit activities.

This booklet is an on going project and we would appreciate your comments, concerns and evaluation at any time.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NEZ PERCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

ANIMALS

Traditional Native American Philosophy:

Native Americans respect animals because they believe animals were the early ancestors of man. There are still animal qualities, characteristics and resemblances in generations of human beings today. Native Americans equate animals to themselves in the sense that they are recognized as persons (animal people). Yet, animals have unique abilities that people have to develop through creative thinking, or acquire through their weyekin.

Conventional Western Philosophy:

People are superior to animals. Animals are to be used to benefit humankind. Some people utilize animals for sport and recreation. Experimentation with animals is acceptable because animals have lower priority to human life. Animals can be "trained" for the pleasure of people; but animals do not "teach". Animals have no spirit or soul.

SPIRITUAL

Traditional Native American Philosophy:

Everything is alive and has a spirit, including rocks, trees, water, wind, etc. Rocks for example, are known as "the ancient ones" thus connecting them both as solidifications of prior life (fossils) and as co-habitants of this earth. Natural phenomena are treated with dignity and respect. Many stories illustrate this point with young boys becoming men by seeking and finding special helpers which accompany and protect them. Some find helpers in animals, some through other inanimate objects. Everything communicates.

Conventional Western Philosophy:

Only humans have a spirit. Inanimate objects exist to be manipulated. People communicate with other people and animals may communicate with each other but people do not communicate with animals or inanimate objects. Animals and inanimate objects have no life after death; in fact, inanimate objects suffer no death. Inanimate elements have no capacity to reason or think critically.

POWER

Traditional Native American Philosophy:

Native Americans view power as something that is personally developed beyond natural abilities, talents, or skills. Specifically, power is the spiritual capacity to overcome the limits of human logic. People may utilize the power of animals and natural phenomena. To have the "power" of animal instinct, or possess the endurance of stone are but two examples. This is a personal inner strength not often exhibited to others.

Conventional Western Philosophy:

Power is associated with authority, control or might. This meaning puts emphasis upon something given or deserved from other people. An individual has as much power as other people are willing to give or as much as one can take. Power is measured by the amount of dominance or control over others; self-dominance receives little respect. An individual's power is usually a threat to others.

DREAMS

Traditional Native American Philosophy:

Dreams are very important to the Native American way of life. Dreams are thought to be part of a person's strength of character. People who can properly interpret their own dreams to benefit themselves and others are highly respected. Dream quests are significant goals. These can occur when a person is conscious. They are simply another form of reality.

Conventional Western Philosophy:

The interpretation of dreams is a matter of concern and interest to few individuals. (For example: psychiatrists or psychologists). Dreams may cause anxiety or fear (nightmares). Dreams are not part of reality. The ordinary person gives them superficial attention at most.

NAMES

Traditional Native American Philosophy:

Names describe a way of life. The Indian seeks the name of something that reflects his or her qualities and aspirations. Names may connect an individual to an ancestor of special merit, or be bestowed by an individual's weyekin. A name is earned or given to inspire someone to develop the values of society. (For example, bravery, wisdom, generosity and skills).

Conventional Western Philosophy:

Names are used simply for identification. They are applied externally and are given before any interaction with the environment is achieved. Names may reflect preference or biases of the giver but not the receiver.

SNOWSHOE AND COTTONTAIL RABBIT
(Legend)

Once there lived Snowshoe Rabbit and Cottontail Rabbit, who were friends or brothers. Somehow, for some reason, at some time they went around this way and that way. Then Snowshoe Rabbit got stranded in the mountains because of the weather--it began to snow, and he couldn't get back because it was quite deep. And that's how they spent the winter: Cottontail Rabbit was in the valley, and Snowshoe Rabbit was in the mountains.

That spring they met again. Snowshoe Rabbit said, "Well, my friend, you have gone through the winter. When I looked out this way toward the valley, it would be dark over there, it might be raining, and I used to say to myself, 'I wonder how my friend is passing his time, and where he is.'" Cottontail Rabbit said, "That's the same thing I would do. I would look toward the mountain and watch; it was dark with storms, and the rain poured down. I wondered how you were living."

Snowshoe told him, "You, my friend, were thinking the wrong thing. I have a good home, and I would throw good wood into the fire and burn it. I lay with my back toward the fire, until the fire crumbled to charcoal and made the house warm and comfortable. That's the way I was living. And I would gather lots of food. That's how the living was--it was very pleasant throughout the mountains. But I wondered about you, and how you were spending your time."

Cottontail said, "Friend, you worried for nothing. As you might have seen from there, I had a good house where there are loose rocks. I would throw hackberry wood into the fire, and it would burn to charcoal. Then I would lie down with my back toward it and get warm. I lived well there."

Snowshoe said, "Yes, my friend, that's the way it will be with you. You, Cottontail, will live here in the lower country, and I will live in the mountains. We have learned that the best life for me is in the mountains, and on the other hand for you it is in the low country. From now on I will change my clothing. When it snows, I will put on the same color white so that nothing can see or find me. On the other hand, when spring comes I will put on new gray clothing so that nothing can find me easily. In this way I will live in the mountains, and in the same way you will spend your time in the lowlands."

Snowshoe Rabbit has never come here since then. On the other hand Cottontail Rabbit is right around here in the low country. That's all.