

NATIVE AMERICANS AND NATURE VIEWS AND VALUES

Native Americans

Many different cultures. No single “Indian” view of nature. But there are some commonalities.

- Nature is something *we live within and as a part of it*. No essential separation: no transcendental dualism, no Enlightenment search for objectivity, no Puritan fear of dangerous, chaotic nature, not distant observation in Romanticism.
- Nature is the location of *spirituality reality*, both individual beings (usually animals) and a more general sense of the sacred.
- Its spiritual value calls for *reverence, respect, and humility* in our relationship with nature.
- But nature is also something that is *used*.
- Not in the Enlightenment sense of conquering and controlling for our material gain, with a sense of superiority toward nature.
- “You say that I use the land, and I reply, yes, it is true; but it is not the first truth. The first truth is that I love the land; I see that it is beautiful; I delight in it; I am alive in it.” (N. Scott Momaday)

Native Americans

- *Paleo-Indians* probably helped cause the extinction of large mammals in North America.
- *Later Indians* came to recognize the spiritual value of what they used and the need to use it sustainably. They developed a moral and conservationist relationship with nature. (N. Scott Momaday)
- *Hunting practices.* Hunters must spiritually prepare for the hunt so they can be deserving, be respectful and humble during the hunt, and be reverent and grateful after the hunt.
- *Resource management.* Native Americans were not passive parts of the wilderness but intelligently used fire to increase its generosity.