



[Indigenous Peoples' Literature](#)

Eagle Stories

I have been to the end of the earth.
I have been to the end of the waters.
I have been to the end of the sky.
I have been to the end of the mountains.
I have found none that are not my friends.

---Navajo proverb

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"Oh, Eagle, come with wings outspread in sunny skies.
Oh, Eagle, come and bring us peace, thy gentle peace.
Oh, Eagle, come and give new life to us who pray."

Pawnee Prayer

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"In an eagle there is all the wisdom of the world."

Lame Deer, Minnicoujou

Death of an Eagle

by Brookie Craig BTRU93A@prodigy.com

Recently, I went to the Warm Springs reservation in Oregon and then to the Federal Eagle Repository in Ashland Oregon.

You probably never heard of Nathan Jim, Jr. He was a Yakima Indian who was arrested for illegal possession of Eagle Feathers and parts, by the Feds a couple years ago. He languished in fed jail for 14 months awaiting trial and was finally put on probation for this heinous crime. His lawyer appealed it under the new Religious Freedom act which guarantees Native Americans the right to eagle feathers to practice their religious ceremonies and again lost the appeal..He killed himself fearing that (in his mind) it would mean that the feds would rearrest him and sentence him to jail again.

This so moved his prosecuting US Attorney that he grabbed a bundle of eagle feathers at the Fed Eagle Repository (yes..our tax dollars at work) and drove to the reservation so they can use them for Nathan's spirit sending ceremony (burial) but arrived too late so Nathan didn't even get a feather in death.

I decided to continue the challenge to the Feds and drove to Ashland Oregon where they keep dead Eagles (yes..its true they have a Eagle repository there) and with much dread and fear (we NA do not TRUST the feds, having felt their wrath many times in the past) and trembled my way through the door fully expecting the worst. I was met at the counter by a little old lady who is a volunteer there. While holding my Bureau of Indian Affairs ID card in one hand and my Cherokee Tribal Registration card in the other, I tried to remember my Ancestors who would want my voice to be strong and proud. I stood a little taller and I said, "I want a Eagle Feather which is my right under the Religious Freedom Act." I expected a lightning bolt to come down but instead saw a gentle smile as she softly said, "Of course," walked over and handed me a packet of federal forms to fill out with instructions to send in to the Portland office of the US department of Wildlife management.

I smiled as I read that I will have to have signed references from another Elder and Verification from the Bureau of Indian Affairs AND my Tribe to prove that I am, indeed a REAL Indian. References even for a Eagle Feather.

She asks..."Do you want a Bald or a Golden Eagle?" CHOICES!?!? I'm not prepared..."Do you want just a wing..or talons..or the head...or the whole eagle?" WHAT?!?!? I come in expecting to be arrested for asking for ONE feather and they're offering me the WHOLE bird?! I am confused by the offer and She sees that I'm unprepared for them offering me choices of parts of this sacred bird and smiles her suggestion that perhaps I might want to look at the drawings of the parts of the bird, circle what I want and include it with the forms...I am defeated instantly by her gentleness.

I ask her how they send an Eagle to me and she replies through the U.S. Mail..THE MAIL?! I cannot envision receiving a dead Eagle through the mail and smile at the thought that I might owe postage due upon receipt.

Walking out the door I turn my head and see a stuffed Eagle, sitting silently perched proudly, in a glass cage, on display in the main lobby

and overwhelming sadness fills my heart as I realize that another Eagle fell from the sky...a man, also fearful but who stood up for his beliefs, who will never be remembered by anyone for a cause that no one really cares about I guess...and the thought of his falling in vain fills me with a sense of profound grief, for our People believe that the Eagle is the sacred Messenger who brings the messages from our Creator...The thought hits me that no one will hear that message for the Eagle plunged to Mother Earth and perhaps mankind might have had a chance to have heard something sacred, but now...will never know.

There is something terribly tragic in that. I hope someone hears this message and cares about Nathan Jim, Jr. and the Eagle who fell from the sky.

There is something inherently evil in the system of a country, that was founded by people escaping religious persecution, that fills it's citizens with such fear that they kill themselves over what they consider to be a basic right of religious freedom.

The Eagle Feather

by Randy Macey, Mohawk

When the world was new, the Creator made all the birds. He colored their feathers like a bouquet of flowers. The Creator then gave each a distinct song to sing. The Creator instructed the birds to greet each new day with a chorus of their songs. Of all the birds, our Creator chose the Eagle to be the leader. The Eagle flies the highest and sees the furthest of all creatures. The Eagle is a messenger to the Creator. During the Four Sacred Riguals we will wear an Eagle Feather in our hair. To wear or to hold the Eagle Feather causes our Creator to take immediate notice. With the Eagle Feather the Creator is honored in the highest.

When one receives an Eagle Feather that person is being acknowledged with gratitude, with love, and with ultimate respect. That feather must have sacred tobacco burnt for it. In this way the Eagle and the Creator are notified of the name of the new Eagle Feather Holder. The holder of the Eagle Feather must ensure that anything that changes the natural state of one's mind (Alcohol and Drugs) must never come in contact with the sacred Eagle Feather. The keeper of the feather will make a little home where the feather will be kept. The Eagle feather must be fed. You feed the Eagle Feather by holding or wearing the feather at sacred ceremonies. By doing this the Eagle Feather is recharged with sacred energy. Never abuse, never disrespect, and never contaminate your Eagle Feather. The Mohawk man will have three Eagle Feathers standing straight up on his Kahstowa (feather hat).

by Erik Phelps

When the earth was created, a great thundercloud appeared on the horizon. Flashing lightning and thundering its call, it descended toward the treetops. As the mists cleared, there was an eagle perched on the highest branches. He took flight and flew slowly down to the ground. As he approached the earth, he put forward his foot, and as he stepped upon the ground, he became a man.

For this reason we recognize the eagle as a messenger of the creator, and rely upon him to carry word of our actions to God. When the eagle comes to where we are working, we know that God cares about us and is watching over us.

by D'Arcy Rheault

Elder Michael Thrasher once told me that the eagle feather has two sides. If the feather had only one side then Eagle could not fly. On one side we find mind/intellect, body/movement and spirit/emotion.

Once these are balanced a person is balanced. On the other side there is institution/education (and not just Western style education), process (the movement on one's path) and ceremony. Once these are balanced then a person's life is balanced. When the two sides of the feather are balanced then we have proper behaviour.

Funny thing is.....Eagle doesn't care if its feathers have two sides....It just opens its wings and flies up to Creator.

Miigwech

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