

NATIVE AMERICAN SYMBOLS TOTEM ANIMALS

The idea of totem animals in the Native American tradition has been made famous from years of less than accurate books and movies. Classically everyone is a [wolf](#) or an eagle or some other noble beast and the idea of totem animals seems to be fraught with superstition. However, the idea has its own basis in being similar to not only being provided with guides, similar in a sense to angels, but also in being guided or taught lessons. In addition we see similarities to [astrology](#) with its use of animal symbolism, as well as animal symbolism woven through many religions and [spiritual](#) systems. Perhaps most shocking to the modern mind is the Jungian idea of Archetypes, universal symbols that can to a degree be looked at in conjunction with totem animal symbolism. Totems are a part of the spiritual path but also represent far more in their value for understanding cultural heritage as well as personality types, once totem animals were agreed upon.

First and foremost some common misconceptions about totem animals should be addressed. The idea that everyone is an eagle or a wolf or a bear, a mighty animal with the most wonderful of traits, animals that the person can choose for themselves based on their own opinions, is not part of the actual belief system. Numerous animals are considered a part of the system of totem [animals](#) and also may be dependent on the tribe or geographical area or tradition. Animals means different things to different tribes additionally. However for the sake of explanation whether it is a bear or an [otter](#) or a dog the animal that is most appropriate is actually thought to choose the person, not the other way around. Traditionally (once again depending on tribe or tradition) the person starts to see what appear to be coincidences or signs or omens concerning what animal is their appropriate animal. In the modern world this could be the sighting of a stag ([deer](#)) followed, by reading a magazine with a striking picture of a stag, followed by seeing a billboard with a stag displayed upon it. The animal in question may have qualities the person has or needs. However once that person is convinced this is the chosen animal totem, as a guide it has great power and significance. In point of fact psychologically the person would of course start to make traditional associations with that animal and might start to act in the forms attributed. Wise as an owl or a fox might be a modern interpretation. While the bear, as [bears](#) do follow the same path over and over again, symbolizing a person with key patterns, as well as possible might and strength and more. [Wolves](#) are considered social creatures. The Raven is the wise trickster, although the [Coyote](#) also can play that role.

The idea of these symbols as all symbols and belief systems has vast importance. In Jungian psychology the idea of archetypes was very

important. Common understanding or symbols throughout humanity and part of the collective unconsciousness or memory of all human beings what key symbols such as death or birth meant. Archetypes basically means greater symbol. Animal totems have the same relevance. Each animal has symbolic significance and is in and of itself a key to lessons that might need to be imparted by what some would call a spirit guide, as well as lessons that need to be learned. The animal totems might embody things or characteristics that the person needs. In Jungian psychology there is a concept of facing our shadow and integrating the things that we cannot accept about ourselves in order to come into the light. In this sense then animal totems embody not only spiritual beings, messengers and guides in a similar sense to angels, but also embody some very firm principles in facing internal [psychological](#) conflicts that can have a bearing on many aspects of life including the spiritual aspect.

Deciding how to choose your totem animal may be a matter of looking for the right signs and interpreting them in many cases. However in the final analysis this practice can have great therapeutic and spiritual value. It can be a religious or spiritual epiphany, or a more practical down to earth lesson in wisdom. It is all about finding your true path, learning many lessons and indeed stretching yourself for personal growth. Indeed there is no one lesson to be learned and a person may go from one totem animal or symbol to another, one lesson to the next. Life is not a destination, it is a journey and we should enjoy and experience each step. So take the chance, take the first step, go down the path to deepening [spirituality](#) and remember to look at the richness offered in many different traditions.