

The Eagle Hoop Prophecy: Introduction to The Four Sacred Gifts

Written by Anita Sanchez, Ph.D.

Friday, 01 December 2017 00:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 27 March 2018 10:19

In 1994, a vision came to a Mohican man as he slept in his house tucked into the large pine trees on the edge of the Rocky Mountains. An eagle flew above his sleeping self, dropping a beam of light upon the man's head. This ray of light began to expand, reaching from the sky to the earth.

Within the light, a very small sprout sprung forth, becoming a tree, growing through each of the four seasons—the spring, summer, fall, and winter. Then the leaves of this tree began to fall off. And then soon, the branches began to fall off. What remained was a single stem of the tree, which rose up vertically and then turned horizontally, bending and forming itself into the perfect shape of a circle to represent the earth and the universe.



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In 1994, a vision came to a Mohican man as he slept in his house tucked into the large pine trees on the edge of the Rocky Mountains. An eagle flew above his sleeping self, dropping a beam of light upon the man's head. This ray of light began to expand, reaching from the sky to the earth. Within the light, a very small sprout sprung forth, becoming a tree, growing through each of the four seasons—the spring, summer, fall, and winter. Then the leaves of this tree began to fall off. And then soon, the branches began to fall off. What remained was a single stem of the tree, which rose up vertically and then turned horizontally, bending and forming itself into the perfect shape of a circle to represent the earth and the universe.

When the circle or hoop was completed, a single dot of light burned in the sky, coming down to the hoop. The dot of light transformed into an eagle feather, attaching itself to the hoop. Then more and more dots of light came from all the four directions—north, east, south, and west—becoming eagle feathers, attaching themselves to the hoop until there were one hundred eagle feathers in all.

When indigenous people seek guidance, being in right relation with their community, they will naturally seek out the wisdom of the Elders, who are in constant connection with spirit and Mother Earth. So, with this vision, Don Coyhis, Mohican storyteller, and members from his Turtle Clan took this vision to 47 Elders in South Dakota, who said, "You need to build that hoop." That was this vision as a prophecy of the coming together of the human race: "There is only one race—the human race."

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When the circle or hoop was completed, a single dot of light formed in the sky, coming down to the hoop. The dot of light transformed into an eagle feather attaching itself to the hoop. Then more and more dots of light came from all the four directions—north, east, south, and west—becoming eagle feathers, attaching themselves to the hoop until there were one hundred eagle feathers in all.

When indigenous people seek guidance, being in right relation with their community, they will naturally seek out the wisdom of the Elders, who are in communication with spirit and Mother Earth. So, with this dream, Don Coyhis, Mohican messenger, and members from his Turtle Clan took this vision to 17 Elders in South Dakota, who said, “You need to build that hoop.” They saw this vision as a prophecy of the coming together of the human race: “There is only one race—the human race.”

“The hoop is an evolving symbol for humanity, as its wisdom and presence reminds us of how to be and how to do.” —DON COYHIS, MOHICAN ELDER AND KEEPER OF THE HOOP

The Elders said, “We walk around on earth in our earth suits. Some come in red earth suits, some white, yellow, and black. Take these four colors of ribbon and wrap each around the hoop, bringing them together in the middle, and joining them with one eagle feather in the center.”

Listening to the Elders, they began to build the sacred eagle hoop. A willow branch was made

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smooth and gently shaped into a circle. They took the colored ribbons—red, white, yellow, and black—praying and wrapping each one around the hoop. They took their collection of one hundred eagle feathers, praying and attaching each one to the hoop.

Then there was a sacred gathering and hoop ceremony. Twenty-seven indigenous Elders from the four colors and directions—Elders from the North American tribes representing the red and south, a Buddhist Elder from Tibet representing the yellow and east, a Sami Elder from Finland representing the white and north, and two Elders from African tribes representing the black and west— responded to the call.

During the ceremony, there was no man-made notion of time—past, present, or future; there was only the Now, one spirit, calling forth through the human beings, through their different languages, through their sacred chants, prayers, blessings, and meditations. There was no separateness, only one mind, one heart, one spirit connecting these Elders and their sacred traditions from the four directions.

The 27 Elders, with joy and solemnity, took cedar planks, and laid them in the four directions, placing the hoop on top, saying, “We have come together. We will put into this hoop four gifts that are necessary for this coming together...this healing time.

“The first gift we place is the power to forgive the unforgivable.

“The second gift is the power to heal.” The Elders prayed their healing medicines into the hoop.

“The third gift is the power of unity. The power to come together.

“And the fourth gift is the power of hope. The ability to dream, to see wellness and the powers to attain it.”

After the sacred eagle hoop was built and blessed by the 27 Elders with their four gifts, the hoop

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began a great land journey, traveling through 35 states in the U.S. and to Canada. Don Coyhis took the hoop and traveled to cities, communities, colleges, reservations, and homes.

He traveled through many seasons, climates, and environments in this land of our ancestors.

And on this journey, an awakening began. A healing time of prayers, tears, hopes, and a creating time of dreams from all the people, indigenous and non-indigenous alike. Standing in a central place, the hoop is both symbol and catalyst to our awakening, which continues to unfold in magical ways as it makes its journey, touching so many lives.

The four colors, the four directions of the hoop, symbolize harmony and interdependence between the different peoples around the world. The hoop is meant to support all people to discover and trust the four sacred gifts, so that each of us can be a life-giving connection to others: all beings, earth, and spirit. The hoop is a powerful force, a powerful medicine, a coming together of the human race.

Momentum is building. A movement is building across our great lands. We are seeing with a clearer vision the strength and wisdom of our Oneness, and the gifts of the hoop are needed now more than ever to help us realize that vision of life.

What Is Indigenous?

Before we continue forward on our journey together, I want to take a moment to describe in more detail what it means to be indigenous, and in particular an indigenous Elder. In the beginning, everyone's ancestors were indigenous. They were hunters and gatherers and lived in relationship to nature, to the earth. This is an anthropological definition of an indigenous person. If you search online, you will find that "indigenous" is usually described as: native or aboriginal or first peoples, who are the original inhabitants of a region or environment.

Now we have confused this term "indigenous" to mean someone who is born and raised in a particular place with other members of their tribe, therefore that makes them indigenous. But for many of us who have been separated geographically and/or culturally from our tribe's original or ancestral traditions and instructions, we then don't regard ourselves as indigenous.

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Indigenous people are often defined as minorities. However, we are legally recognized as Nations in a country such as the United States, not minorities. Nations with rich cultures and knowledge, and with diverse traditions and practices. However, all of these definitions only touch the surface.

Across many indigenous peoples and their tribes, people point to a common description rather than a single definition, and that is: A truly indigenous person is one who has intimate connection with Mother Earth and who embraces all human beings in order to get along with them. There is a respect for diversity, which is part of the circle of life. Pluralism is valued, so it does not matter what color you are, for there is no being better than or less than, no negative judgment. We are all connected. Indigenous peoples listen to not only their minds but most importantly to their hearts, and to what Mother Earth is saying. This description of indigenous people is what I hold to be true.

As for indigenous Elders, these men and women are “tradition bearers” and are recognized by their people, specific tribe, or culture group as having wisdom. Being an Elder is not necessarily a function of age. The Dalai Lama is an example of becoming an Elder as a child.

To many indigenous people, Elders are people who are steeped in the traditions or the passed-down knowledge of a community or tribe. They carry on the traditions, stories, and memories of their people. In every indigenous culture I have experienced, people who have taken on roles as healers, cultural leaders, and spiritual teachers are referred to as Elders.

Also, an Elder can be really funny. Elders have a twinkle in their eye; they have both the innocence of a child and the deep wisdom of the ancient. They know that magic exists and are playful with it. They know how to balance things, creating harmony and connection.

How does somebody come to be considered an Elder? An indigenous Elder will never call himself or herself an Elder. What happens is that the community that they are from, the people, will recognize his or her wisdom—the fact that they are tradition bearers, healers, cultural leaders, and spiritual teachers. This is more than acknowledgment of their age; it is a term of respect for their lifetime commitment to embody, practice, and share indigenous wisdom. Through their actions, decisions, practices, and knowledge, Elders are seen for who and what they are, are sought for their wisdom, guidance, and counsel. In doing so, the people, the community, give them the title of Elder.

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The wisdom that indigenous peoples, Elders in particular, have is more important than ever. And this wisdom is our interconnection, our circle of life, as represented so beautifully by the sacred eagle hoop.

Why Is This Wisdom Needed?

Look around you. Look around in your community, town, city, state, country, and the world itself. Look at our media, our politics, our businesses, our culture. You will see that people act as if they are separate, alone, and have no relations. As a result, we think and behave in ways that cause needless suffering, further division, and reckless destruction. We act as if our behavior does not impact the circle of life, and as a result of that denial, we are out of harmony.

How do we get back into harmony? Indigenous wisdom tells us that we can do so by living in connection with all life—with all people, the earth, and spirit. The four sacred gifts can give us the support and guidance to get there.

The Promise of the Four Sacred Gifts

The prophecy of the sacred eagle hoop is an urgent message for these urgent times. And, being an indigenous prophecy, it does not revolve around a single person, prophet, or hero. The focus of the prophecy is not on the messenger but rather on the message itself, and the collective community or tribe that holds the message. This is good news.

You and I, all of us, indigenous and non-indigenous, are meant to fulfill the message of the hoop with its four sacred gifts. The hoop prophecy does not predict the future; rather, it presents the probable positive or negative consequences of not heeding the original instructions from spirit. This is what is needed to joyfully fuel our hearts, thoughts, and actions in order to deepen our understanding, to live the truth, the reality, that we are all connected.

So if you do not remember where you came from, your culture, or your tribe, you have now found your Home. Welcome to this community, the community of human beings who accept these four gifts from the Pan-Indigenous Collective of Elders, and who will use their power to create harmony and connection with all other beings.

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The time for bringing together the Medicines of the Great Hoop of Life has come. It is a time that has been prophesied by peoples all around Mother Earth for a long, long time, and so we can open our hearts to hope.

—Pat McCabe, Navajo Elder

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