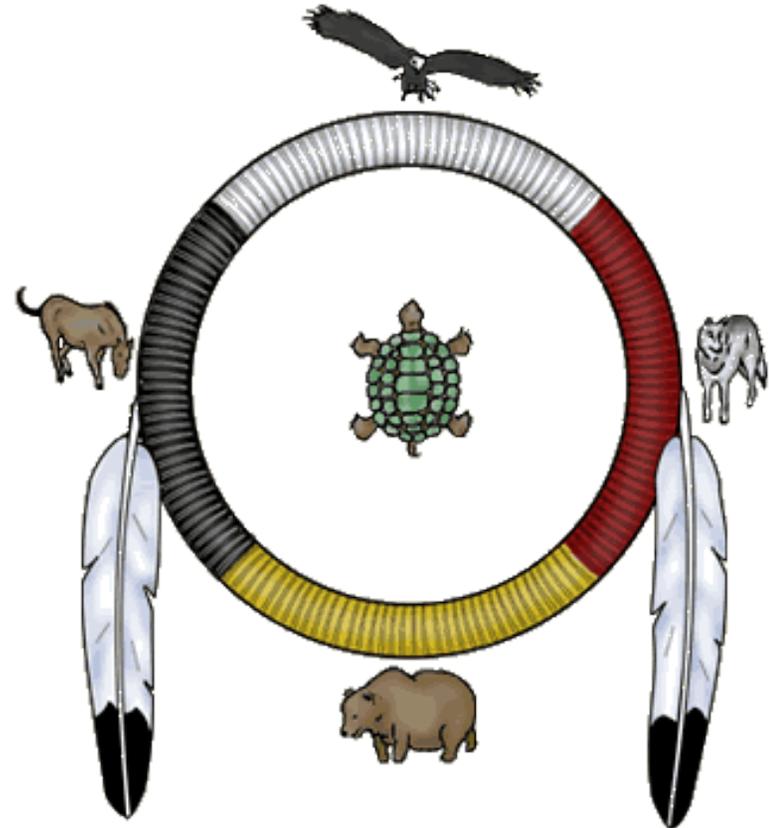


Mother Earth Spirituality

- Historical Influences: Pre-contact Spiritualities
- Approx. 70% of North America's native population dies as a result of contact – disease, slaughter, loss of livelihoods = starvation, etc.
 - leads to loss of spiritual traditions (elderly die in greater numbers, spiritual traditions not passed down)
- Determined Christianization efforts eradicates more native traditions
- Generally speaking, the further west native peoples lived, the more intact elements of their spiritual traditions survived (because contact came later).



Pre-Contact Spiritualities



Many different Native spiritual traditions; two main types:

Hunting pattern

- Traceable to Asian origins
60,000-30,000 years ago
- Animal ceremonialism, vision quests, male supreme being, annual ceremony of cosmic rejuvenation, shamanism, afterlife beyond horizon or sky

Agricultural pattern

- 7,000-1,500 years ago
- Rain and fertility ceremonies, priestly ritual, belief in many gods/goddesses, yearly or seasonal festivals, medicine societies, afterlife under earth, or in clouds

Revitalization Movements

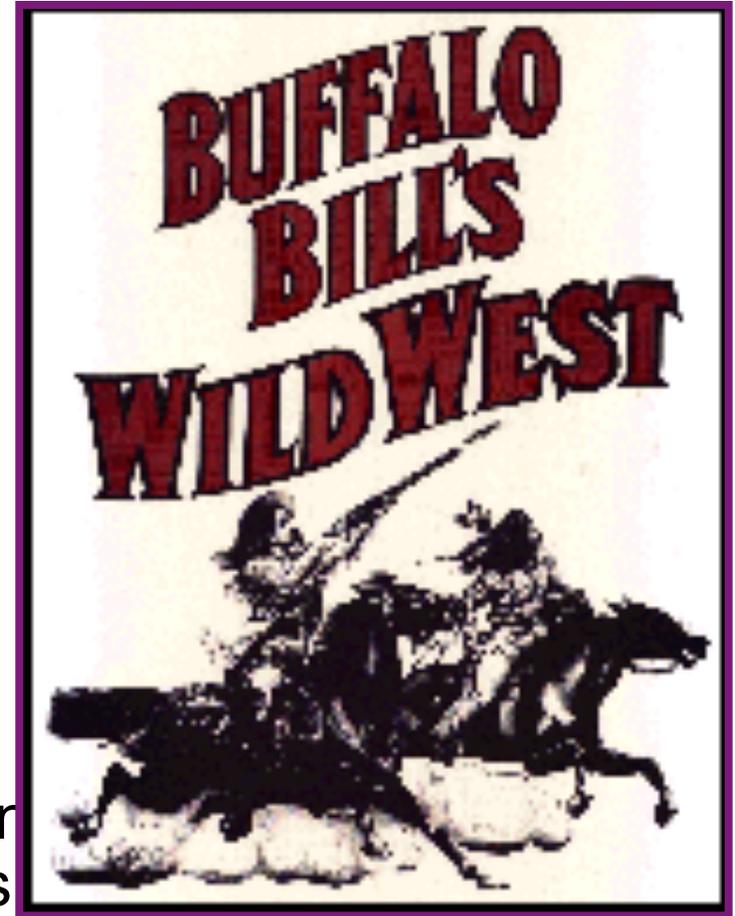
- Ghost Dance Movements 1870, 1890
- Smoholla – Dreamer Religion
 - Dangers of European ways, particularly alcohol
 - End of world, followed by new world where dead would live again
- Wovoka
 - Dreamer religion influence – same elements
 - In new world, Europeans would be gone
 - Dance in trance to see spirits of dead
- Sioux tribes
 - Adopted Wovoka's ghost dance
 - More militaristic flavour
 - Ghost shirts would be impervious to Calvary bullets
 - Massacre at Wounded Knee, Dec. 29, 1890



Wovoka

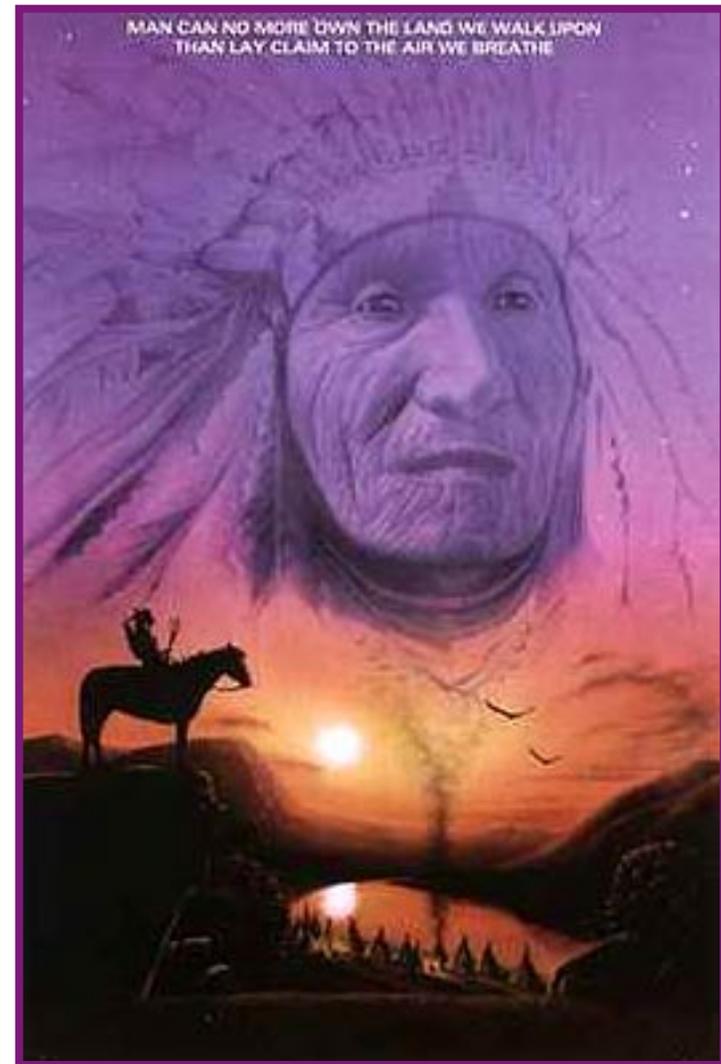
Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show

- Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show
 - Founded in 1882
 - traveling circus, rodeo
 - Sitting Bull, Annie Oakley
 - Sioux Indians
 - war paint
 - feathered "bonnets"
 - Peace pipe
 - Buffalo hunters
- Creates uniform image of "Indian" in non-native minds
- Unites natives of many tribes by giving sense of unity, common experiences



Romanticization of the Indian

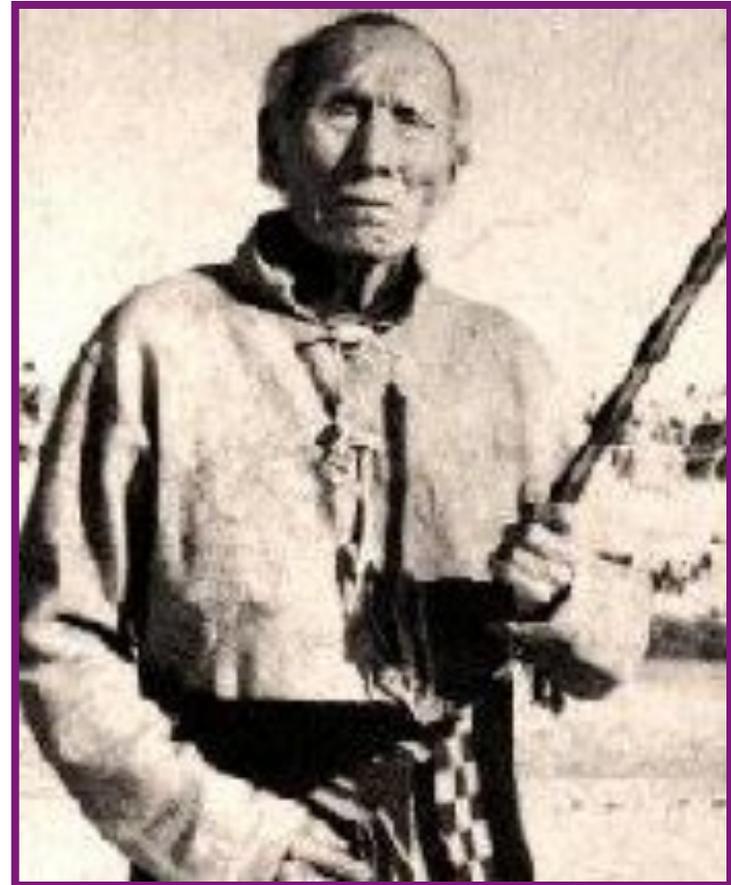
- Euro-Americans have always seen natives as opposite to own perceived shortcomings, so:
 - Missionaries saw natives as “innocent” vs. “corrupt” European settlers
 - Settlers saw natives as “savages” vs themselves as “civilized”
- 19th Century image of native shifts from “savage” to “noble savage” – naturally spiritual, naturally ecological
- Letter of Chief Seattle
- New Age image = native as spiritual, ecological



“Lone Brave” Poster

Black Elk

- Nicholas Black Elk
- Black Elk Speaks by John Neihardt (1932)
- The Sacred Pipe by Joseph Epes Brown (1953)
- Search for the historical Black Elk?
 - Catholic conversion 1904
 - Books present him as traditional Sioux holy man



Nicholas Black Elk

Black Elk's Vision

- Age nine, collapses into coma for 12 days; has a vision. In the vision:
 - He meets with six powers, who tell him his task is to make his vision come true
 - They gift him with power to give life, bring death, to heal, bring peace, to found a new nation, to cleanse, to influence the earth
 - He then has a vision within a vision, in which he ends drought, heals the sick, and plants a “tree” that will shelter people of all races under its branches.
 - He then foresees two generations of peace, followed by a new period of violence and troubles; he intercedes to bring healing and understanding, and issues in a new age of peace.



“Black Elk’s Vision,” by David Sherod

Black Elk's Rituals

- Peace Pipe
- Keeping of the Soul (Spirit Releasing Ceremony)
- Sweat lodge
- Vision quest
- Sun Dance
- A Girl's Coming of Age
- The Making of Relatives
- The Throwing of the Ball

- Most of these have been incorporated into New Age Mother Earth Spirituality
- Black Elk stressed the Peace Pipe and the Sun Dance as the most important
- Recounted in The Sacred Pipe



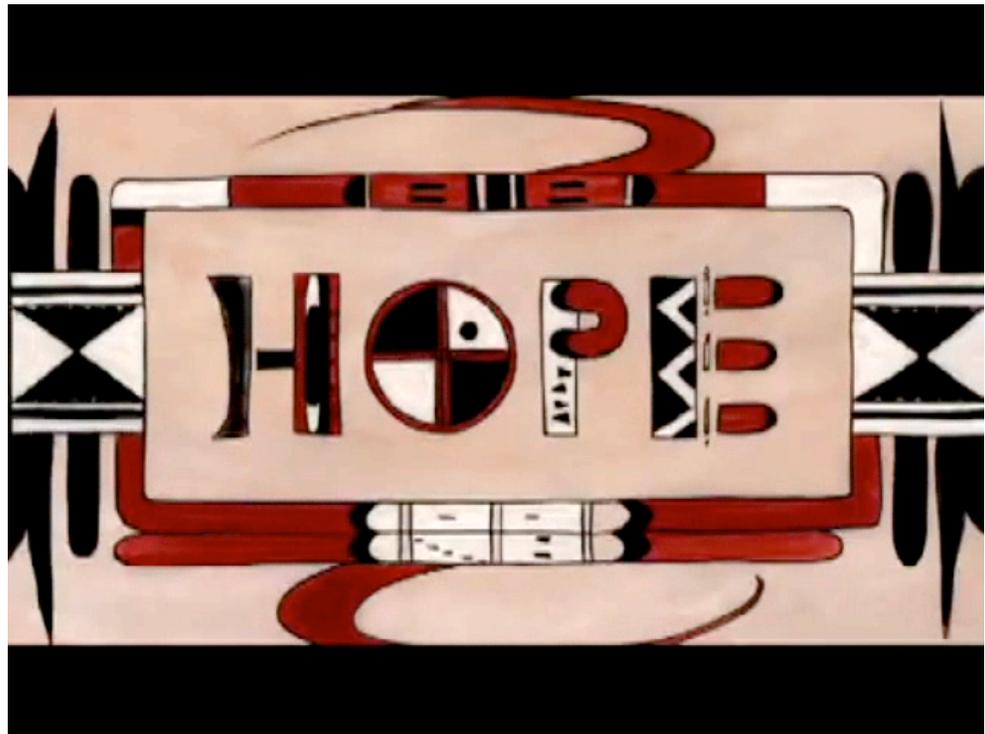
A Girl's coming of Age ceremony

Mother Earth Spirituality

- New Age Worldview adds two elements:
- Animism:
 - Animal spirits
 - Totem animals
 - Power animals:
 - Bear: strength, resourcefulness, protection
 - Owl: perception, wisdom, instinct
 - Wolf: sensitivity, guidance, truth
 - Eagle: intuition, inspiration, achievement
- Nature-based
 - Mother Earth spirituality theology = reverence for Earth as Mother
 - Social activism:
 - Anti-pollution; pro-native issues such as protection of burial sites, sacred sites, etc., anti-war



- Mother earth spirituality is based on premise that First Nations spiritual teachings can help the entire world find an ecologically sustainable, peaceful global society...



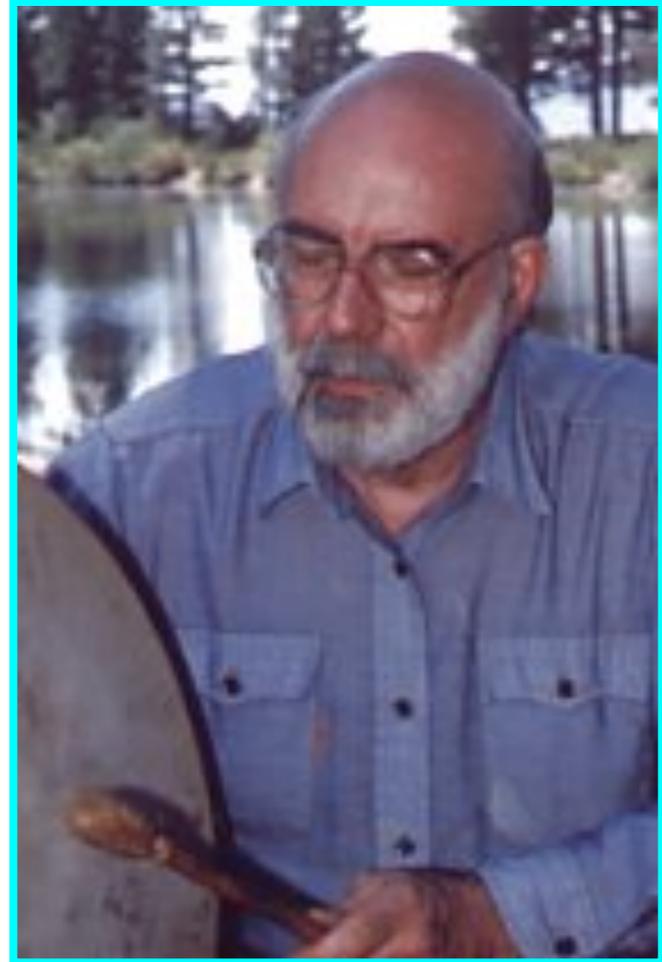
Varieties



- Three Main Types:
- Tribal Reconstructionist
 - Native peoples attempt to reconstruct & revive own tribe's spiritual traditions
 - Added elements include concern for environmental & social justice issues
- Pan-Indian Spirituality
 - Native people's adoption of generic "Sioux" inspired spirituality to replace lost traditions
 - Political component – American Indian Movement (AIM) uses Mother Earth spirituality to foster two goals: 1) develop sense of pan-Indian identity that transcends tribal lines; 2) distinguish lands, rights, religion of native peoples from non-Native – "whites" excluded from rituals
- New Age Mother Earth Spirituality
 - Native & Non-Native people's attempt to practise spirituality inspired by Native (primarily Sioux) traditions
 - Appropriate for any person drawn to earth-based, environmentally sound, healing-oriented spiritual tradition

Primal Shamanism

- 4th “type” of Mother Earth Spirituality
- Draws on world’s shamanic traditions (not just Native American)
- Michael Harner, author The Way of the Shaman (1980)
- Foundation for Shamanic Studies (1983)
- Does NOT stress reverence for Mother Earth, but does provide training in shamanism for many non-Natives who DO practice Mother Earth spirituality



Michael Harner

Bear Tribe Medicine Society

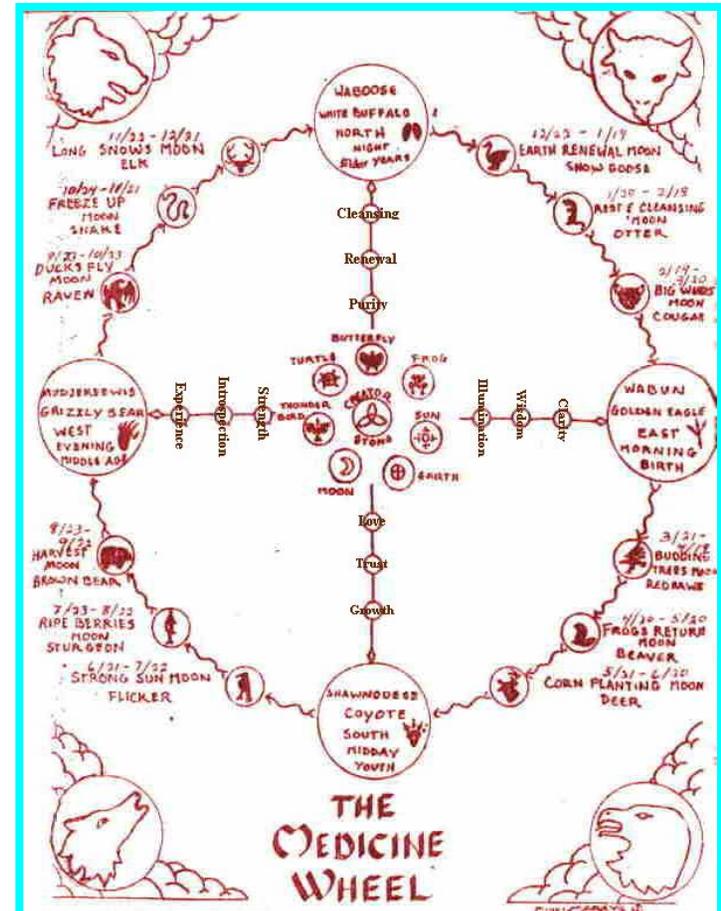
- Sun Bear (Vincent La Duke) born 1929 (Ojibwa)
- Sun Bear's Vision (age 4): bear surrounded by globes of many colours, who touches his hand
- Sun Bear's interpretation of Vision: called to unite peoples of all colours in spiritual goal to heal earth.
- Bear Tribe Medicine Society founded in 1966
- Society now headquartered in Klamath Falls, Oregon: holds yearly cycle of festivals & training program in shamanic techniques.



Sun Bear & successor Dixie Wind Daughter

Rituals: Medicine Wheel

- Key proponent = Bear Tribe Medicine Society
- Weekend long ritual
 - Participants “smudged” (sage, sweetgrass)
 - Build circle of 36 stones, representing sacred places in the universe
 - In centre of circle, buffalo or other animal skull placed, symbolic of Creator & centre of universe
 - Participants make “tobacco ties” & place them in circle with prayers for healing the earth
 - Ties made in one of four cardinal colours (west/black; north/white; east/red; south/yellow)
- Other events at Bear Tribe Medicine Wheel weekends: sweat lodges, healing sessions, classes on shamanism, herbal ore, etc.
- Key topic: Earth Changes
 - Earth has been poisoned, she is attempting to cleanse herself of the poisoning
 - This will lead to weather changes, earthquakes, etc.
 - Medicine wheel will help earth cleanse herself by representing image of perfectly aligned universe



Sun Bear's vision of a medicine wheel with symbolism

Rituals: Peace Pipe Ceremony



- Based on Sioux legend of Buffalo Calf Woman giving Pipe to Sioux people
- Pipe filled with tobacco or red willow bark
- Pipe offered to east in honour of new beginnings, south for growth & healing, west for darkness & release, north for courage, strength, truth
- Pipe also offered to Earth, to thank for bounty, & sky, to thank Father Sky (Wakan Tanka – Great Spirit, Great Mystery)
- Pipe then lit, passed from person to person. Smoke held in mouth, not inhaled
- Smoke represents truthful worlds, truthful actions, truthful spirit
- Peace pipe ritual precedes other rituals of Mother Earth Spirituality Movement

Rituals: Sweat Lodge Ceremony

- Key proponent = Wallace Black Elk (Lakota Sioux)
- Purification (& healing) ceremony
- Often precedes other rituals (such as Vision Quest or Sun Dance)
- 8ft x 12ft approx. lodge built of bent saplings, covered with blankets or branches
- Pit dug in centre, to hold heated rocks
- Water is poured over rocks, to produce steam, which purifies participants



Wallace Black Elk

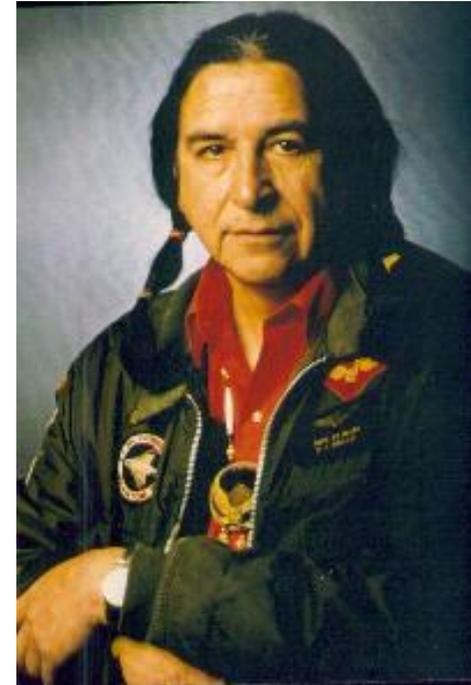
The Four Endurances

- Four cycles of sweat lodge ceremony:
 - Participants enter lodge, meditate & pray
 - Heated rocks brought in: glow of rocks = only light in lodge
 - Water poured to create steam, & leader offers prayers offered for peace, knowledge, wisdom, healing
 - 3 more dippers of water poured, followed by drumming & singing & prayer to Wakan Tanka
 - Participants then focus on/pray for goal of each endurance: first for contact with spirit world, second for courage, third for wisdom, fourth for healing.
 - Brief opening of door flap to let cool air in, then closed
 - Cycle repeats 3 more times



Rituals: Sun Dance

- **On first day:**
- Cottonwood tree is cut, after asking permission & explaining why necessary.
- Tree placed in dance circle with peace pipe; coloured banners (4 cardinal colours, plus blue for sky, green for earth) are tied to tree.
- Twelve branches tied to tree.
- Participants undergo sweat lodge ceremony.
- **Days two & three:**
- Begin with sweat lodge ceremonies.
- Ritual clothing, red paint, sage wreaths around wrists, ankles, head.
- Dancers follow Sun Dance leader in dancing around pole from dawn to sun set, blowing whistles

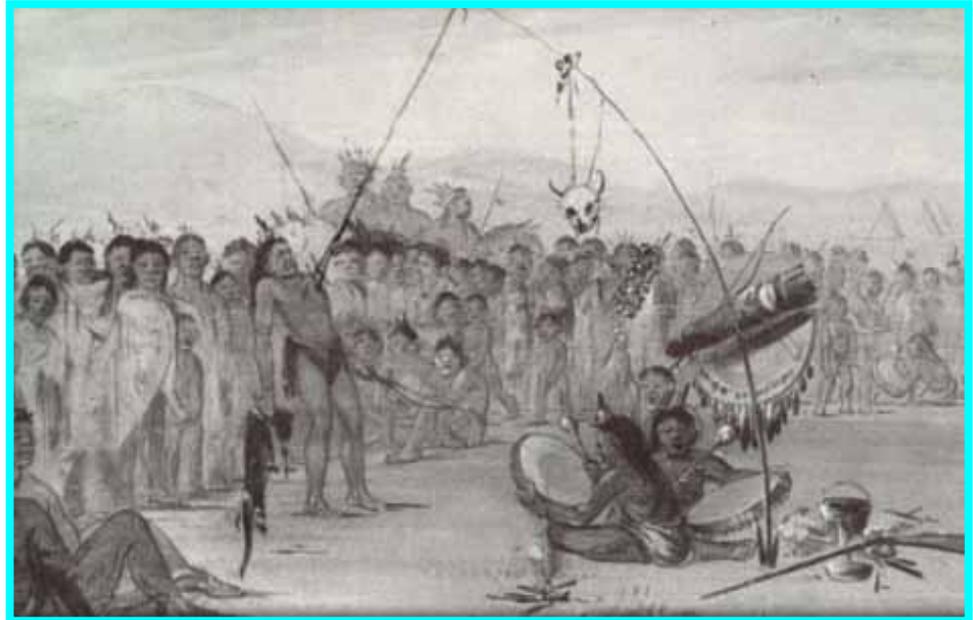


Ed McGaa (Eagle Man)

- Key proponent = Ed McGaa (Eagle Man) (Oglala Sioux)
- Primarily confined to native participants
- Four day long ritual

Sun Dance: Day Four

- **Day four:**
- Same as days 2&3, but on this day male dancers have the flesh of their chests pierced and are attached to ropes tied to pole
- Symbolic of union with sky, earth – willingness to give all to heal earth
- Women do not have chests pierced – already sacrifice via pain in childbirth
- Final dance steps: dance in towards tree, & out again four times. On fourth time, lean back & tear skewer from flesh – breaking umbilical ties to earth.



Other Rituals

- Vision quest – private ritual, 24-48 hours, fasting, search for vision
- Giveaway Blanket – give a gift to the blanket, take one away (mirrors Native practice of redistribution of goods – wealth is shared)
- Making of Relatives – blood brother/sister ritual – spirits of four directions called to witness exchange of blood (today, sometimes other symbolic binding is used – bound hands, or joint sacrifice of cherished objects given to charity)

