

American Indian Quotes

Unit: Animals (Elementary)

“Indian people have a different relationship with everything around them because we spent a lot of time with the animals not looking at them as a different entity but looking at them as part of who we are. So if this animal got sick over there, you watched, you knew you had to watch whatever that animal was doing, because it would affect you. If your environment was sick, your people would be sick. It was all the same, all integrated into one. Like trees, their roots grow way down into the earth and you can’t separate them. That’s why when we lived here everything we did we had to do for future generations.”
—*LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, Lakota (Sioux), 2002*

“We are brothers and sisters with all living things on this earth. All the animals and fish and birds have red blood just like we do, they breathe the same air we breathe, they drink the same water that we drink. That’s why we call them our relatives. And that perspective needs to be brought out. It tells about us conveying some kind of knowledge or ability to at least somehow communicate with other species on this earth....”
—*Allen Pinkham, Nez Perce, 2002*

“Porcupine quill embroidery on smoked buckskin was a most important and particularly sacred women’s craft. When a Plains Indian woman decorated a robe with porcupine quills, she was not just involved in making a useful object aesthetically pleasing, but as a member of a women’s quillwork ‘guild,’ she was obliged to fast and pray before commencing her work, and she had to retain a contemplative attitude as she worked with the brightly dyed quills. In the mythology of all Plains peoples, the porcupine, which climbs high into trees, is associated with the Sun and the creative principle. The quills, therefore, which she placed in geometric patterns established by tradition were really rays of the sun, and thus eminently sacred. The quillworker had, as it were, trapped the sun, understood as a spiritual principle, upon a garment now of both utilitarian and spiritual value. These were values which were real and operative both to the maker and for the wearer of the garment. Neither art nor what we call religion were here divorced from each other or from life.”

—from *Animals of the Soul*, by Joseph Epes Brown

“Certain parts of the animal were more prized than others, such as the various innards: liver, pancreas, heart, and kidneys. The fatty flesh from the hump of the animal was especially prized by the old people with poor teeth for its tenderness and nutritional value.”

—from *Animals of the Soul*, by Joseph Epes Brown