

All Things Were Kindred

"From Wakan Tanka there came a great unifying life force that flowed in and through all things – the flowers of the plains, blowing winds, rocks, trees, birds, animals--and was the same force that had been breathed into the first man. Thus all things were kindred and brought together by the same Great Mystery Kinship with all creatures of the earth, sky, and water was a real and active principle The animal had rights – the right of man's protection, the right to live, the right to multiply, the right to freedom, the right to man's indebtedness – and in recognition of these rights the Lakota never enslaved the animal, and spared all life that was not needed for food and clothing

Everything was possessed of personality, only differing with us in form. Knowledge was inherent in all things. The world was a library and its books were the stones, leaves, grass, brooks, and the birds and animals that shared, alike with us, the storms and blessings of earth. We learned to do what only the student of nature ever learns and that was to feel beauty."

So wrote Luther Standing Bear, Lakota elder, in *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (1933).

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"One should pay attention to even the smallest crawling creature, for these too may have a valuable lesson to teach us, and even the smallest ant may wish to communicate with a man."

So Black Elk, Lakota elder, spoke.

