A sample entry from the

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**Further Reading**

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*See also*: Dolphins and New Age Religion.

## SP American Indians as "First Ecologists"

The image of North American Indians as first ecologists, conservationists, and environmentalists, which can be called the Ecological Indian, became dominant in the 1960s. Today, many, including American Indians, accept it as an accurate representation of Indian behavior through time. Yet the image has deep intellectual roots and has gone through various iterations, from a generalized nature-dwelling noble indigenousness, through one emphasizing pragmatic skill in the environment, to today's full-blown Ecological Indian.

### The Noble Indian in Nature

From the moment they encountered indigenous people in the Western hemisphere, Europeans classified them in order to make them sensible. They made the exotic comprehensible with familiar categories. In the process they reduced men and women to stereotypes, to caricatures, noble or ignoble, benign or malignant, rational or irrational, human or cannibal – savages all. For centuries two polar images of Indians in the New World – noble and ignoble – have clashed. Until recently, the Ignoble Indian ruled; a menacing, malignant image construing the Indian in the extreme as a bloodthirsty, inhuman cannibal akin to the Wild Man of European folklore. In contrast, the Noble Indian (or Noble Savage), never entirely absent – the peaceful, carefree, unshackled human; the wise, dignified elder; the nostalgic romantic; the spiritual guide; the polished orator – was and is a benign, often romantic, image of people living innocent, vigorous, clean lives in a golden world of nature.

Columbus was first to ennoble the inhabitants of the New World when, on his second voyage, he wrote that he had found the Islands of the Blessed and its natural inhabitants – a place and people in the European imagination. His readers were not surprised – at least not those for whom several mythic places originating in pagan or Christian tradition were linked in the imagination and collectively expressed ideas of earthly paradise, eternal spring, or innocent life removed in space or time. An imagery traceable to these understandings remained potent long after Columbus as writers invoked ancients like Tacitus or various classical analogs like the Scythians to render intelligible the native people of the New World.

Over two centuries, the French were without peer in developing an imagery of nobleness. Best known was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who presented savage life as simple, communal, happy, free, equal, and pure, and ensured that Noble Indians would rule the second half of the eighteenth century as allegorical America or in other genres. He and others mined the classics for ennobling thoughts that they applied unhesitatingly to the native people of the New World, and quickly linked the development of favorable virtues to "la pure Nature." Many still considered their own (French) civilization superior to any developed by the children of nature in the New World; indigenous people came up wanting in faith, laws, and kings (*ni foi, ni loi, ni roi*). *Ni foi* meant, of course, that religion was barely worthy of the name (as had also been so for Columbus, who depicted Caribs as lacking in religion). Yet while they denigrated these aspects of indigenous culture and institutions they also seized on liberty and equal access to basic resources as characteristic of savage life and important virtues to emulate. Thus, contained in their observations of the New World was a critique of their home society. For example, Michel de Montaigne and Baron de Lahontan set the stage for Rousseau by lauding natural New Worlders and in the next breath condemning French society. Lahontan even invented a Huron Indian named Adario to critique the European scene and those who had stripped him of property. As one historian remarked, many used the New World as a stick with which to beat the Old.

### The Skilled Woodcrafter

The nineteenth-century inheritors of the tradition of the Noble Indian in nature include not simply Romantic nature poets but James Fenimore Cooper, the best-selling author from the 1820s through the 1840s and arguably the most important figure in the nineteenth century for further development of such imagery. All manner of Indians can be found in Cooper's works, especially the Leatherstocking series, of which *Last of the Mohicans* is best known today. The most famous are dignified, firm, faultless, wise, graceful, sympathetic, intelligent, and reminiscent of classical sculpture in their bodily proportions. In his portrayal of Noble Indians, Cooper was strongly influenced by John Heckewelder, the Moravian missionary and relativist sympathetic to the Lenape and their history; indeed some criticized Cooper for unrealistically noble portraits "in the school of Heckewelder."

Whereas for writers of an earlier day it was enough that Indians' lives unfolded in "nature," for Cooper what was weighty were Indian *actions* in nature; specifically, their skill in the forests and prairies. Cooper's Indians demonstrated competence and even transcendent skill in nature. In contrast, non-Indians (except the protagonist Natty Bumpo) generally lacked such skills. Moreover, white men (except Natty) often wasted what they killed or otherwise were greedy. It is Natty, the conservationist, not some

Indian, who has something to say about the gluttony of whites and remarks, "Use, but don't waste." There is one notable exception: in forceful remarks in *Last of the Mohicans*, Magua, a Wyandotte Huron lumped with Mohawks and other Iroquois as "Mingoes," states passionately that the Great Spirit gave Indians North America ("this island"), forested and full of game, but then he also granted whites "the nature of the pigeon" – that is, exploding numbers, tirelessness, and insatiable appetites suited to control over the Earth.

Magua, no Noble Indian, is one of the most infamous of Cooper's arch-demons, which substantially muddied reception of his message about the Great Spirit or white people's avarice. For authority one needed Natty himself, the protagonist of heroic proportions (in part from taking on the anti-conservationists of the frontier) and nature herself, heroine of unsurpassed dimensions. Cooper cast nature as sacred for Natty (not Magua), its sacramental quality deriving from God not indigenous animism. There are no such complications, however, when it comes to Cooper's highly pragmatic image of indigenous skill and craft in nature, which in the mid-nineteenth century was shared even by writers who seldom had anything positive to say about Indians.

When he set out, at the turn of the twentieth century, to reproduce Cooper's image of skill and craft in nature, Ernest Thompson Seton, a founder of the Boy Scout movement and first chief scout in America, ensured that the image did not die. Charismatic, a riveting speaker and fluid writer whose words reached millions, Seton placed the utmost emphasis on this aspect of Cooperian nobility – Indian skill in nature, which became known as woodcraft. In the 1890s, Seton formed the Woodcraft Indians, a boys' group that spread and contained the seeds of the Boy Scouts. In time, Seton sought to combat degeneracy and build character and manhood in boys through proficiency in camping, hunting, fishing, mountaineering, boating, signaling, sports, and nature study. He sought to instill in each boy his version of Cooper's Ideal Indian – a person who was kind, hospitable, cheerful, obedient, chaste, brave, honest, sober, thrifty, and provident; who held land, animals, and all property in common thereby checking greed and the accumulation of wealth (and division between rich and poor); and who condemned waste and those who took delight in slaughtering animals.

Seton's appropriation of Cooper resulted in the domination, for almost one century, of an image of the Indian as the Skilled Woodcrafter (who increasingly practiced his craft safely in the past). This image flowered in the wake of sharp declines in numbers of buffaloes, white-tailed deer, turkeys, and beaver, and the extinction of the passenger pigeon; deforestation and the western creep of population and industrialization; and the birth of national parks and promotion of conservation through new organizations. It flourished at the time of – and was in tune with – the progressive conservation movement.

Some traits of Seton's Skilled Woodcrafter characteristic of Natty Bumpo rather than Cooper's Indians – thriftiness, condemnation of waste – can probably be traced to the influence of Charles Eastman (also know as Ohiyesa), who was active in scouting circles at Seton's time and consulted by Seton before the latter published his Ideal Indian character traits. Eastman was a Sioux Indian who took his maternal grandfather's (the soldier-artist, Captain Seth Eastman) White Man's Road to college and medical school, and for nearly forty years (1900–1940) was the most visible Native American writer and public speaker, producing best-selling books on his own life and Indian ways. Betraying the complexity in the origin of his ideas, he paid homage not just to his Dakota grandparents but to the nature poet Coleridge, and ceased publishing books after he became estranged from his wife, a skilled non-Indian writer from Boston and New York.

Eastman's works (like Seton's) ennobled Indians both by resurrecting romantic visions of lives long past and by emphasizing woodcraft. In the autobiographical *Indian Boyhood*, Eastman spoke about Indians as wild, free, students and children of nature, and masters of woodcraft, and about animals as friends who offered their bodies for sustenance. His relatives, he remarked, taught him to be a close observer of nature and a skilled hunter. He extolled their "spiritual communion" with brother-like animals. He depicted his early life with Indian relatives as natural, altruistic and reverent, and his current life in the company of whites as artificial, selfish, and materialistic. He sought to train Scouts in what he called the "School of Savagery" emulating Indian training in the "natural way." One refrain in Eastman's books – and found in Seton as well – contrasts conservation among Indians and whites: Eastman wrote that Indians killed animals from necessity while white people killed them wantonly for amusement or greedily until none remained. Lastly, Eastman, far more than anyone who preceded him, emphasized the sacral qualities of nature. Even though Eastman considered the Sun Dance barbaric, he extolled the "spiritual communion" that Indians established with animals that possess childlike (innocent) souls. He wrote about every act being a religious act and about sublime nature. A transitional figure, his influence cannot be overstated.

### The Ecological Indian from Earth Day to Today

In both Seton and Eastman can be found the germ for the image of the Ecological Indian, which, in the late 1960s-early 1970s, became the latest in a 500-year history of images ennobling the relationship between North American Indians and nature. The Ecological Indian is the original ecologist, conservationist, and environmentalist, who has always possessed an intuitive, natural attitude toward the living world. Its most famous rendition

appeared in 1971: the Crying Indian (Iron Eyes Cody, a self-ascribed Cherokee actor) enlisted by Keep America Beautiful in an anti-litter campaign; an American Indian weeping because pollution is "a crying shame," his direct gaze riveting viewers and shortly making, to use the language of advertising, over 15 billion people-impressions.

The Crying Indian is structurally reminiscent of Lahontan's Adario in that he stands not alone but against – against the non-ecological whiteman. The Crying Indian wept for history, for America shattered by European settlers and their successors, for animals hunted to extinction by people of European descent, for trashed, even burning, rivers, littered and scarred and even desecrated landscapes, oil-slicked and tarred seas, and other environmental horrors. The Crying Indian, an American Indian, was free from blame but non-Indians in his gaze were not. As Iron Eyes became iconic, American Indians henceforth became widespread symbols for environmental attitudes and the conservation cause.

Like the preceding images – the Noble Indian in Nature and the Skilled Woodcrafter – the Ecological Indian was the image for the times: an era of violent anti-war and civil rights protest, and of assassination and societal upheaval, but also unprecedented for bitter battles over environmental issues. In this period the language and science of ecology broke into public consciousness (and were conflated with environmentalism), environmental prophets like Rachel Carson gained fame and notoriety, as books appeared with titles speaking to America raped, explosive population growth, or Earth as a sinking ark. The first Earth Day (April 1970) drew the largest demonstration in American history, environmental problems were *Time*'s "Issue of the Year" in 1971, and the 1970s were the so-called Environmental Decade.

And as the deployment of the Crying Indian makes clear, Ecological Indians were marshaled to the support of environmental causes. Many in the countercultural movement moved back to the land in communal groups, seeking to reverse their alienation from nature. They turned their backs on Judeo-Christian anthropocentrism and biblical injunctions of dominion and rule over nature (even if one could find almost anything one looks for on humans and nature in the Old and New Testaments, or if adherents to these faiths have behaved in almost every conceivable way toward nature). Many consciously looked to American Indian lives for community, new aesthetics, and personal freedom; they wore beads, lived in tepees, and used tribal metaphors; they mined American Indian religions (and Zen Buddhism) for insight on sacramental qualities in nature. Theirs was a conscious critique of society; in them Lahontan and Rousseau were reborn.

One of the most important environmental organizations to emerge in this era, Greenpeace, was also the most visible for the convergence of environmentalism, critique of the social order, and the Ecological Indian. One Greenpeace founder considered that its aim was to fulfill an American Indian prophecy of a time when people of different ethnic backgrounds would join forces to defend the Earth. They were Warriors of the Rainbow – the name was from a book on American Indian prophecy – who would stop the desecration of the Earth and, like Ecological Indians, preach love for animals and use only what is required for food or clothing. Greenpeace activists wore Red Power buttons, adopted a Northwest Coast killer-whale crest as a symbol, and were blessed by the Kwakwaka'wakw en route to protest in the Aleutians. Greenpeace was supported by the most famous Indian actor, Chief Dan George, and cursed by the most famous Indian fighter on the screen, John Wayne.

American Indians embraced the new shift in perception and actively helped construct the new image of themselves. In 1969, Indians who occupied Alcatraz Island not only sought justice on a number of issues but aimed (among other things) to form an Indian Center of Ecology in order to halt environmental destruction. The Iroquois, through the White Roots of Peace, advocated environmental education, and the Hopi spoke of the need to clean up the Earth else it would again be destroyed.

In Indian writing, a new canon emerged in which nature and the environment figured significantly and which contained an explicit critique of people of European descent and their culture. A concern for sacredness, beauty and harmony, and place and community is manifest in this literature. Among the most widely read works were *Black Elk Speaks* (originally published in 1932), in which Black Elk's reminiscences were filtered (and sometimes created) by John Neihardt, whose goal was to live decently on Earth. Chief Seattle's lament on environmental destruction became gospel for Indians and environmentalists. These and other works in the new canon, by Scott Momaday and others, were replete with images of nature, animism, and harmony in Indian relationships to the environment in contrast to the destructiveness of non-Indians. All this provided fertile soil for the image of the Ecological Indian.

This imagery has remained virtually unchanged in the last forty years – but so has concern for the mounting human impact on the environment. The 20th Earth Day in 1990 was considered by some as the largest global demonstration ever, with over 100 million people marking the day in some way. First ozone depletion and now global warming have become worldwide concerns. Today there is worldwide concern over the role the United States will play in solving global environmental problems that to a large extent are of its own making.

Indigenous people generally and American Indians in particular continue to serve as symbols of a time when the human impact on the environment is perceived to have been negligible. In 1992, indigenous people participated critically in the Rio Earth Conference and today they loom large in discussions of the rainforest. Ecological Indians

can be found in best-selling books, in film, and on television and video, on global Earth Summit stages, in the writings of historians, native people, ecofeminists, deep ecologists, and others. Most key texts in the new canon remain authoritative although Chief Seattle's speech has deservedly lost its luster. The imagery that fell into place decades ago after centuries of rootedness in ennobling soil has proven to be remarkably resilient. And for many Indian people today, the Ecological Indian is an important aspect of their identity as Indian.

But is the fit, through time, between image and behavior a good one in North America? This important question, especially in a day when neither the enormous scale of transformation in the modern global environment nor the antiquity of the human role in environmental change, in North America or the world, should be in doubt, has been scrutinized elsewhere (for example, in human environmental impact). With respect to the two principal components of the image of the Ecological Indian, ecology and conservation, I have argued in *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* that while ecological or systemic thought was surely widespread if always culturally framed, conservation was not. In fact, for the many indigenous people in North America who believed that if respected in proper fashion (respect having nothing to do with Western conservation biology), their prey would later be reborn or reincarnated so that they might again be killed, conservation as it came to be defined in the West was foreign and even senseless. Moreover, no matter what people's beliefs or attitudes might have been, there were surely too few American Indians too thinly spread out to have made much of a lasting difference on lands and resources. The story, in other words, is far more complicated than simple stereotypes suggest.

*Shepard Krech III*

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*See also*: Black Elk; Greenpeace; Indian Guides; Indigenous Environmental Network; Mother Earth; Noble Savage; Religious Environmentalist Paradigm; Savages; Scouting; Seattle (Sealth), Chief.

## Ammons, A.R. (1926–2001)

For the American poet A.R. Ammons, divinity was an omnipresent force that flowed through everything in existence. In retracing the spiritual journeys of his verse, one finds elements of Christian asceticism, Buddhist renunciation, and Daoist affirmation – but it might be most accurate to describe the religious dimension of Ammons' work as *pantheistic*. This poet's world is aflame with a divine spark that appears "everywhere partial and entire . . . on the inside of everything and on the outside" ("Hymn") (1986: 9), from the darkest depths of space to the teeming sub-layers of soil. Though such a universe might seem godless and uncaring, this would rest on a limited understanding of divinity. For Ammons, the whole world pulsates with power, its spirit dispersed across air, water, and Earth rather than withheld on a shadowy plane.

Like Emerson and Whitman, Ammons senses a primal, primary energy permeating and connecting everything – including the poet. "My nature singing in me is your nature singing," his glorious ode "Singing & Doubling Together" proclaims (1986: 114). Each created form partakes of an original grace: "I know / there is / perfection in the being / of my being, / that I am / holy in amness / as stars or / paperclips" ("Come Prima") (1971: 52). All life stems from a cosmic point of beginning, what ancient civilizations called the godhead. The interpenetration of matter is beautifully expressed in Ammons' early poem "Interval":

> The world is bright after rain
> for rain washes death out of the land and hides it far
> beneath the soil and it returns again cleansed with
> life
> and so all is a circle
> and nothing is separable (1971: 36).

This ceaseless cycling is embodied (and disembodied) by the maggot, which "spurs the rate of change," transfiguring organic matter so that it will someday return to live again ("Catalyst") (1971: 110). Though every thing must pass away, the irreducible unity of the larger field is preserved: "Earth brings to grief / much in an hour that sang, leaped, swirled, / yet keeps a round / quiet turning, /