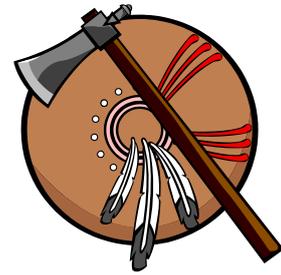


ANIMAL HONOUR

Native North Americans have always had a close relationship with animals, (and plants). Some tribes believed that they were descended from animals and that animals were part of the family. (I suppose it is almost the same as our modern idea of evolution, in a way.)

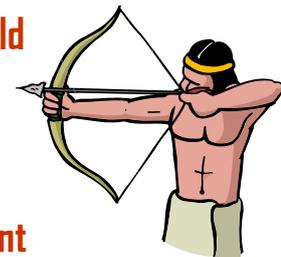


Many tribes believed that the animals should be shown the same respect that they would show to other humans. The people honoured the animals because they believed that they were willing to give up their lives so that humans could live,



Some people believed that the animals actually understood that the people had to kill them as food and weren't unhappy about it.

BUT, they were *never to treat animals cruelly*. In fact, animals were often helped if they were found to be in a bad situation. Some believed that the animal had a spirit of its own, and also one shared by other animals. If a hunter was cruel to one animal, the others in its species would also be upset.



There were hundreds of rules that the hunters had to obey; otherwise their luck in the hunt might run out. (Luck is a powerful superstition for people who have to rely on finding their food, rather than going to a supermarket!) It could be a disaster for the family or tribe if the hunter's luck gave out!



Hunters would never brag about what might happen in a hunt, as that might 'tempt fate' so that the opposite might happen. Hunting was a dangerous business, and no one wanted to bring bad luck upon himself.



The Pawnee always held a ceremony called 'The White Beaver Ceremony' to honour the animals as they woke from their winter hibernation. They thought that, when winter was over, the Gods breathed new life into the beaver, so that



they would live again. (They didn't understand how hibernation worked.) They thought that, if they honoured the beaver, some of the magical powers would be passed on to their own 'medicine men' so that they could help the ordinary people.



Hunters in the Arctic were very respectful of their prey. They would hold feasts where they would put food into the fires, so that the spirits of the animals they had killed could share the meal. The bones of bears they had killed were protected, in case they offended all of the bears. The heads of caribou were cut off as soon as they were killed, so that their spirits would not suffer.



Some Inuit hung ivory charms on their ropes, to keep the spirits happy and bring good luck.

Inuit always kept their camps neat and tidy, as they thought the whales they caught preferred it that way.



BELIEFS OF OTHER CULTURES

So, what can we learn?

1. How were Native American beliefs quite close to our own scientific beliefs?
(Discuss evolution and what it means. What do YOU believe?)

2. How did Native Americans think wild animals felt about being hunted?

(Are you a hunter? Do you eat meat? Should we eat meat? (Think about your dentition! What does that tell you?) Do you wear leather? Are we really any different to the Native American hunters?)



3. What were Native Americans NEVER to do? What do you think about that?

4. What did they believe might happen if they were cruel to animals? Why might that be a disaster for them?



5. What would a hunter never do before a hunt? What do we mean by 'tempting fate'?



6. What did the Pawnee believe happened to the beavers during the winter? What did they believe happened in the spring? Why did they think this? (Discuss what YOU think happens to many animals during the winter.)

7. How did the Arctic Inuit honour the animals they killed?

8. What other name do we give to Inuit people? (They don't like the name. Inuit just means 'the people'.)

