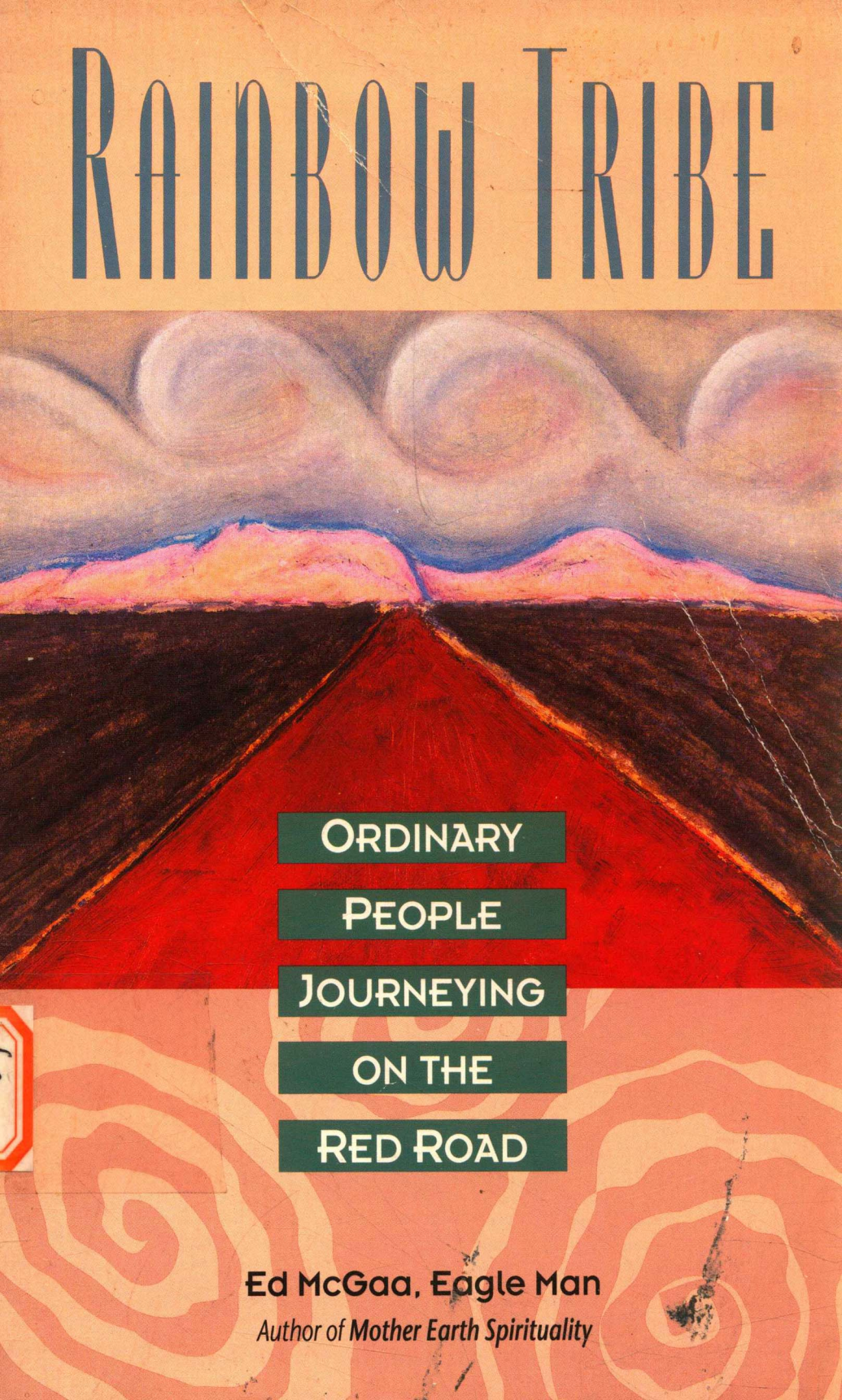


# RAINBOW TRIBE



ORDINARY

PEOPLE

JOURNEYING

ON THE

RED ROAD

Ed McGaa, Eagle Man  
*Author of Mother Earth Spirituality*

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Harper San Francisco and the author, in association with the Rainforest Action Network, will facilitate the planting of two trees for every one tree used in the manufacture of this book.

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# RAINBOW TRIBE



Ed McGaa was born on the Oglala Sioux reservation and is a registered tribal member, OST 15287. Following the earning of an undergraduate degree, he joined the Marine Corps to become a fighter pilot. Captain McGaa returned from 110 combat missions and danced in six annual Sioux Sun Dances. The Sun Dance led him to the seven Mother Earth ceremonies under the tutelage of Chief Eagle Feather and Chief Fools Crow, two Sioux holy men. Eagle Man and the Rainbow Tribe people discovered each other during preparations for the Harmonic Convergence. Ed McGaa, Eagle Man holds a law degree from the University of South Dakota and is the author of *Red Cloud* (Dillon Press, 1971) and *Mother Earth Spirituality: Native American Paths to Healing Ourselves and Our World* (Harper & Row, 1990).



Books on spirituality and philosophy tend to generate many letters. The author would very much appreciate the enclosure of a self-addressed stamped envelope by readers who write to him.

## DEDICATION

To Frank Fools Crow, Oglala Sioux Holy Man. Spiritual Chief of the Traditional Lakota Sioux. 1890? 1891?–1989.

To Chief Eagle Feather, Sichangu Sioux Holy Man. Sun Dance Warrior Chief for the Return of the Sacred Tree. 1914–1979.

I deeply admire the rare warriors with that special courage to go out to the lonely edge—the chasm of change—where the detractors are many and the supporters are few. Bill Eagle Feather went to that edge and brought back the Sun Dance piercing. Publicly, boldly, defiantly, out in the open. And Frank Fools Crow pierced him.



To all Rainbow contributors within these pages.

To Mark Salzwedel, editor, again, for his direction and perception.

To Rosana Francescato, production editor, and Anne Collins, copyeditor.

To Sun Bear, a brave warrior who sought spiritual unity.

To Morgaine Avalon.

## FOREWORD



It did not take long for the red nations to express their desire for the dominant society to change its way of thinking, its values, its ignorance of a living Earth. You can see this yearning in the speeches of Native American leaders from the colonial period onward. I thought this book was necessary because I have found a people who are making that essential change toward the Natural Way. What can most effectively curtail the past practices of human and environmental destruction? It is simple: the conveyance of knowledge about the best spiritual and cultural qualities of the Natural Way. Our destiny is linked to this change or we perish. I believe the change will have to come from those who are presently in control, not from those who stand on the sidelines detracting.

Too many of the red-way people are standing idly by complaining and not realizing that they can be of tremendous assistance to many across this planet. Maybe the luxury of doing nothing could be indulged in if we lived on separate planets. But that is not the case. We all perish together if we lose this earth to overheating, pollution, greed, and overpopulation. None of us chose to live in the aftermath of this Industrial Age destruction, but fortunately there are those who choose to learn what makes the Natural Way harmonize with all life forces and our relatives within. This book speaks of their knowledge quests, their grail that is made of bravery, courage, generosity, and wisdom. I hope that it will teach the new aspirants who seek this way of communion with nature and with the Mystery Source that manifests itself through the natural world.

The Rainbow Tribe is here. Each dawn, the numbers increase. No longer will the priceless wisdom of nature-based spirituality be ignored. We do not have any choice. Global warming, acid rain, overpopulation, and deforestation are real.

Old wisdom that has performed so well will now be allowed to work its environmental medicine where it is desperately needed.



Two-leggeds are coming together to bring forth a sacred hoop of harmony made up of many flaming hoops. An optimistic quest for peace will be an important benefit of this nonthreatening harmony. A spiritual fire now nurtures a communal commitment to a worldwide environmental undertaking. Rainbow energy will fuel that fire and give it great power.

Who are the Rainbows? Rainbow Tribe people work in cities and towns. Some are housewives still raising their young. Rainbows work, thrive, vote, pay taxes, abide by laws, are drug-free, abstain from or touch little alcohol, and do what almost everyone else does legally in this land. They also do ceremony and have found a closer connection to the created entity all around them. Rainbows have stepped back into nature, and this has become a glorious spiritual leap for them. Rainbow tribalism is bolstered by modern medical and scientific advancements. Rainbow spiritual perception is gained from natural participation in what many of the old tribal ways have preserved. Rainbows have found their path, their tribal unity, and a rich harmonic connection while they travel their earth-walk journey.

The harmony and deep peace of Mother Earth have brought many of the Rainbow Tribe people into a sacred perspective. Individual quests and group beseechments, blended with natural ceremonies held directly upon the soil and grasses of our planet, have deepened the spiritual quest of the *Wigmunke oyate*, the Rainbow Tribe people. In ceremony, Mother Earth has acknowledged Rainbow endeavors.

Out of ceremony, Mother Earth has issued some stern warnings that humankind's past practices of unchecked "dominion over nature" will no longer be tolerated. Nature is tallying devastating results of centuries-old suppression of natural spiritual enhancement. Despite human neglect, nature seems to be forgiving and is still offering its knowledge for those who have the integrity to observe and contemplate.

Startling world changes are occurring and, like Rainbow spirituality, they are fostered by communication and knowledge. It is becoming more difficult for those who think only of themselves to subjugate those who realize that we are all related. In this age of communication, the search for freedom and the search for a fulfilling nature-based truth have united. Man-designed religious fears employed by the old eclipsing regimes have no hold over the Rain-

bow Tribe. Rainbows will not follow the patriarchal hierarchies where fundamentalist-fomented fear, manipulation, and oppression have reigned. Rainbows use their minds to find their spirituality! Rainbows employ the natural intellect that God has given them and bolster it with courage, generosity, and acquired wisdom through observation and increasing knowledge.

Some Native Americans have come forth to offer knowledge and experiences. Over a half century ago, Black Elk met with a white man to tell of his deep and powerful vision. Later he sat with another non-Indian to expand upon the seven sacred ceremonies. These men, John Neihardt and Joseph Epes Brown, were writers. Black Elk intended that the knowledge of the Natural Way be preserved and passed on for the benefit of all two-leggeds, tribal and nontribal.

J. Epes Brown stated, "The old man [Black Elk] knew that he was soon to die, and he did not wish that this sacred lore, much of which he alone knew, should pass away with him."<sup>1</sup>

Fools Crow and Eagle Feather, two venerable Sioux holy men who rebirthed the Sun Dance, followed Black Elk's example. Their ceremonies did not exclude anyone because of gender, color, or bloodline. Indeed gifted, as evidenced by their spirit-calling powers, both holy men spoke out for unity and cooperation among the races of the four colors. These men traveled often, far from the reservation, to hold ceremony for the healing and acculturation of Indians and non-Indians who sought their counsel.

Frank Fools Crow said, "The power and ways are given to us to be passed on to others. To think or do anything else is pure selfishness. We only keep them and get more by giving them away, and if we do not give them away we lose them."<sup>2</sup>

Old books holding a treasure of shared knowledge from native men and women of world vision once sat dusty upon the shelves of time. But now in these enlightened days they have been reprinted and along with new writings are being voraciously consumed. Enlightened two-leggeds who have catalyzed world progress in the realms of freedom and scientific knowledge are now reaching beyond into environmentalism and spirituality and discovering that the two are related. They are finding the courage to cast off age-old fears and are beginning to walk forth within their own individuality. Vacant spaces of Mother Earth now dance with ceremony. Her stones, forests, and waters are becoming understood.

The *Wigmunke oyate*, the Rainbow Tribe people, have come forth to learn how Mother Earth can be revered and protected. I am thankful for the timely arrival of the Rainbow Tribe.

Note: The names *Lakota*, *Dakota*, and *Sioux* will be used interchangeably throughout this book. At this time, my tribe is still officially addressed as the Oglala Sioux, as is the adjoining tribe, the Rosebud Sioux. That is how the tribal councils have been referring to themselves for some time. The terms *Native American*, *American Indian*, and *Indian* will also be used interchangeably. Most older Native Americans have been called Indians all their lives and have become accustomed to that term; therefore, interchange is preferred here. Also, I am more concerned about spiritual content than about semantics, whose overplay too often distracts from harmonic values.



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## PART ONE



# ORIGIN OF THE RAINBOW TRIBE

*These Two-legged will be called the Rainbow Tribe, for they are the product of thousands of years of melding among the five original races. These Children of Earth have been called together to open their hearts and to move beyond the barriers of disconnection. The medicine they carry is the Whirling Rainbow of Peace, which will mark the union of the five races as one.*

Jamie Sams, *Other Council Fires Were Here Before Ours*





# 1

## RECONNECTING WITH THE NATURAL WAY

Down through time, tribal human beings (two-leggeds) lived in environmental tranquillity, but now, in only a few Industrial Age centuries, we have come to an ecological chasm of perilous pollution and exponential overpopulation. When rationally gifted beings became separated from the spiritual connection bonding them to the Natural Way, environmental destruction began.

While reaping a rich life-style, Native Americans preserved this portion of the planet for centuries upon centuries. I believe this high plane of living, which bore great gifts to the world, was a result of their deeply spiritual relationship with nature. In an age of unchecked industrial growth and the ecological disaster it has fostered, we had better start studying the first Americans' life-styles, values, and knowledge immediately. We could also well use a spiritual base that does not advocate "dominion over nature," but rather brings us to an intrinsic relationship with nature as dependent servants—not polluting, self-destructing masters. After we have observed and studied, we can approach some of the nature-based ceremonies to find values that will significantly advance us toward our goal of planetary preservation. Getting back to nature will be the key to saving the planet. Our day-to-day social and governmental endeavors will be ethically enhanced as well.

Most Native Americans do not attempt to describe the Great Spirit. We believe that it is rather foolish to attempt description of

the Creator of space and time—things our two-legged minds cannot totally comprehend. How far out is space? Where does it end? Our minds cannot conceive of a total answer. When did time begin? What is time? How can we attempt description of the *Creator* of such mystery when we honestly realize that “It” is too vast to describe? We are truthful people. We cannot be liars to ourselves and to those around us! The term *Great Mystery* leaves adequate latitude to avoid an argument.

Many two-leggeds (human beings) share the belief that there is one beginning in this universe. It is called by many names: Great Spirit, God, Allah, and other titles. All animate and inanimate entities are usually accepted as created by this one essence. All occurrences are influenced by this one Creator.

Growth comes with an increasing awareness of and respect for Great Mystery in all people and things, with an awareness that this force of mystery is at work in all events. Growth comes through tolerance for the infinite variety of ways in which Great Spirit, the Infinite, may express itself in this universe.

Natural people throughout the planet are exploring revelation from created nature, exploring that extension made directly by the Creator, the Higher Power, the Prime Mover, the Ultimate Force, or the Great Mystery. They are learning from what is directly revealed and from what they can taste, touch, feel, observe, and study. Now, modern seekers (some of them call themselves the Rainbow Tribe) are beginning to recognize the visible powers of the universe. They are addressing, cultivating, and nourishing the heart of the spirituality that has been with their unbroken gene link, their beginning, down through the circles of time. Like the native tribal ones of old, they too are sensing that we, and all the life forces that surround us, are extensions of that Great Mystery force itself and have a great purpose for being here—especially at this time.

One tribe, in particular, is only a century removed from their natural life-style. The Sioux were the last major tribe to come in from their unencumbered freedom on the Great Plains. Maybe this explains why the Sioux have preserved much of their nature-respecting culture, more so than many of the other tribes who have had to endure a much longer diluting contact with the dominant society. Upon the plains, the Sioux heeded the visible six powers of the universe and related to these entities in balance, acknowledgment, and kinship. Their culture managed to survive despite the



relentless assault perpetrated upon the Lakota/Dakota (Sioux) descendants, who were corralled into captivity by a biased and materialistic society.

The earliest Americans considered every day a spiritual association with nature. The culmination of this association was ceremony. Ceremony is beseechment, thanksgiving, or acknowledgment to a higher power, a higher force, or, if you are a traditional Sioux Indian, ceremony is directed toward the *Wakan Tanka*, the Great Spirit, the Great Mystery, the Great Unending Circle, through the six powers of the universe, the six powers that Black Elk's powerful vision speaks of.

Bill Moyers's interview of Joseph Campbell was shown on a national television series. One of Moyers's questions reflected on spiritual imagery.

Campbell replied: "The best example I know which might help to answer that is the experience of Black Elk" (referring to Black Elk of *Black Elk Speaks*).<sup>1</sup>

After Campbell explained a portion of Black Elk's vision to Moyers, Moyers interpreted. "This Indian boy [Black Elk as a youth] was saying there is a shining point where all lines intersect."

Campbell: "That's exactly what he was saying."

Moyers: "And he was saying God has no circumference?"

Campbell replied: "There is a definition of God which has been repeated by many philosophers. God is an intelligible sphere—a sphere known to the mind, not to the senses—whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. And the center, Bill, is right where you're sitting. And the other one is right where I'm sitting. And each of us is a manifestation of that mystery. That's a nice mythological realization that sort of gives you a sense of who and what you are."<sup>2</sup>

In the chapter "Where People Lived Legends" in *Transformation of Myth Through Time*, the spiritual philosopher goes on to say, after speaking again of Black Elk, "The function of the ritual and the myth is to let you experience it here, not somewhere else long ago."<sup>3</sup>

The function of vision, ritual, and perceiving intellect is to allow us to experience our spirituality here and now. We are a manifestation of the six powers physically. Three of the powers make up our very life form, our visible being. These are earth (sixth power), water (west power), and energy (the fifth power—the energy from the sun). The other three powers make up our inner being and are