



Wisdom of the Elders: Sacred Native Stories of Nature

By David Suzuki, Peter Knudtson

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An in-depth, meticulously documented exploration of the ecological wisdom of Native Peoples from around the world

Arranged thematically, *Wisdom of the Elders* contains sacred stories and traditions on the interrelationships between humans and the environment as well as perspectives from modern science, which more often than not validate the sacred, ancient Wisdom of the Elders. Native peoples and environments discussed range from the Inuit Arctic and the Native Americans of the Northwest coast, the Sioux of the Plains, and the Pueblo, Hopi, and Navajo of the Southwest to the Australian Outback, to the rich, fecund tropics of Africa, Malaysia, and the Amazon.

“Our technological civilization is speeding toward a violent collision with nature, and we are threatening the ability of the Earth—our home—to support life as we know it. Suzuki and Knudtson’s extraordinary work powerfully reminds us that we are indeed one with the Earth. We are truly indebted to them for charting for us the course toward a healthy and sustaining relationship with our planet.”—Vice President Al Gore

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this low-key, capacious study, Suzuki, a professor of genetics at the University of British Columbia, and science writer Knudtson (coauthors of *Genethics*) compare primitive, aboriginal modes of perceiving the natural world with "Western culture's ecologically destructive worldview." Chapters focused on humans' relationships with, for instance, animals, vegetation and the universe begin with brief summaries of scientific explanation and continue with relevant myths and accounts of daily rituals of such societies as the Chewong in Malaysia, Alaska's Inuit and the Kayapo of the Amazon. Overpopulation, deforestation, solar energy and cyclic and linear approaches to time are considered; of particular interest are essays on the !OK Kung Bushmen's understanding of mammals' physiologies and the Australian aborigines' mythical prehistory, "Dreamtime." Although students of indigenous cultures may find this text basic, it presents an eloquent plea for modern society to more considerately interact with nature.

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From Library Journal

This book provides an interesting examination of some of the ecological themes that are of concern both to scientists and indigenous people in various parts of the world. The authors (*Genethics*, Harvard Univ. Pr., 1989) contend that these two groups pursue their knowledge of the natural world in different but complementary ways and often come to similar conclusions. Throughout, the scientific viewpoint is compared to the native perspective. Each chapter focuses on a particular ecological or biological topic, and several pertinent examples from a variety of traditional world cultures are described. Relevant quotations from well-known scientists and ecologists are interspersed within the text, providing further thoughtful commentary. Overall, this is a well-organized, sensitive, and thought-provoking work that will be useful in popular science and ecology collections.

- Elizabeth Salt, Otterbein Coll. Lib., Westerville, Ohio

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About the Author

David Suzuki is an internationally renowned geneticist and environmentalist and a cofounder of the David Suzuki Foundation. He is the author of more than fifty books and is a recipient of the Right Livelihood Award, UNESCO's Kalinga Prize for the Popularization of Science, and in 2007 was named one of *Time Magazine's* Heroes of the Environment. He lives in Vancouver.

Peter Knudtson is a nature writer and former wildlife biologist. He received his master's degree from California State University and his bachelor's degree in premedical zoology from the University of California. Additionally, he studied at the University of North Carolina and the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism. He worked as a wildlife biologist in Alaska before coauthoring *Genethics* and *Wisdom of the Elders: Sacred Native Stories of Nature* with renowned environmental activist and academic David Suzuki.

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