

When the world was new, the Creator made all the birds. He colored their feathers like a bouquet of flowers. The Creator then gave each a distinct song to sing. The Creator instructed the birds to greet each new day with a chorus of their songs. Of all the birds, our Creator chose the Eagle to be the leader. The Eagle flies the highest and sees the furthest of all creatures. The Eagle is a messenger to the Creator. To wear or to hold the Eagle Feather causes our Creator to take immediate notice. With the Eagle Feather the Creator is honored in the highest.

When one receives an Eagle Feather that person is being acknowledged with gratitude, with love, and with ultimate respect. That feather must have sacred tobacco burnt for it. In this way the Eagle and the Creator are notified of the name of the new Eagle Feather Holder. The holder of the Eagle Feather must ensure that anything that changes the natural state of ones mind (such as alcohol and drugs) must never come in contact with the sacred Eagle Feather. The keeper of the feather will make a little home where the feather will be kept. The Eagle feather must be fed. You feed the Eagle Feather by holding or wearing the feather at sacred ceremonies. By doing this the Eagle Feather is recharged with sacred energy. Never abuse, never disrespect, and never contaminate your Eagle Feather.

The Eagle (Migizi in Ojibway) holds a very special place for Native peoples. The Eagle soared so high in the heavens that Native peoples held it in high esteem since it was so much closer to the Creator. The Eagle became a power of vision, strength and courage. There are many special meanings and special uses for the Eagle.

Many Native teachings explain that Eagle is the Principle Messenger of Creator. Eagle flies the closest to Creator and, therefore, can see the past, present and future at a glance. Eagle sees the flow of change. Eagle alerts us to the changes so that we can respond appropriately. Eagle is the great illuminator and soars above us all, sometimes out of sight to us, but never out of its own sight. Eagle sees and hears all and sits in the east on the Medicine Wheel with the direction of leadership and courage.

In other words, Eagle is connected both to the spirit of Great Mystery and to the Earth and does both with ease. Eagle, therefore, is a powerful symbol of courage; that is why its feathers are such powerful tools for healing, and why there are special ceremonies for Eagle feathers. Eagle teaches us that it is okay to combine wisdom and courage — it is okay to be wise enough to know that a change needs to be made in one's life and then finding the courage to execute the change.

A gift of an Eagle Feather is a great honor. It is a mark of distinction, one that could indicate that a rite of passage has been earned. The Eagle Feather represents the norms, responsibilities and behaviors that are all a part of the conditioning, learning and commitment to a spirit. It is in this way that life is honored and becomes whole.

The quill of an Eagle Feather represents stability, strength and foundation. In the Cycle of Life or wheel of life, it represents the spirituality of the people. This is where the beginning and ending meet. The quill represents the beginning and ending in the spiritual journey of life. Birth and death are represented here as rites of passage from and to the spiritual world. Conception, the nine month journey and childbirth are sacred and begin here. Traditionally, there were ceremonies or celebrations for the beginning of life.

The plume of an Eagle Feather or fluff is white, billowy and soft. It represents the purity, lightness and gentleness of a child full of the spirit and so new to the cycle of life. The plume is distinctive and usually a token of honor.

The plume in the Cycle of Life is the beginning of the formative years, childhood. It is the age of innocence, pride and dreams – a time for bonding and attachment to relationships, values, attitudes, behaviors, personalities, character and to the environment. It is a time for security and integration.

The vane of an Eagle Feather represents flexibility and adaptability with gentleness and firmness. The vane has a unique design as each feather is unique. Each individual is also unique. This is the expanded part of the feather just as youth are now expanding into the world and each is responsible for themselves.

In the Cycle of Life, the vane is the continuation of the formative years. The children have achieved their rights of passage, a boy becomes a hunter or warrior and a girl has reached womanhood. During this phase, there is learning and guidance. The mind, the mouth, heart and hand (avenues for the spirit) are being nurtured. Example and reinforcement are given in the proper direction to strengthen their spiritual well being and identity. It is a time of enrichment, logic and proof.

The entire feather is straight, strong, firm and gentle. The top portion represents the peak of life. The conduct of adulthood is to bring out the best in beauty and goodness. Men have achieved bravery, skill or character and have been renamed accordingly. Women have achieved a level of knowledge basic to the survival of the people. Self-discipline, survival skills, loyalty, solidarity, and respect within family are above all individual interests. The foundation laid for them is intact. Interdependence, empathy, insight and foresight enables them to be keepers and protectors of the culture. It is at this phase that marriage and child-bearing are foremost.

The opposite vane continues to represent flexibility and adaptability with gentleness and firmness. In the Cycle of Life, a level of seniority is established. Conduct of parenthood has been proven and movement into grand parenthood is inevitable. Relationships, community and nationhood are important. Responsibility for the welfare of others, young and old is the purpose of guidance. To encourage and support others is to give back what was given and to give more of one's self.

As in the opposite, the plume of the Eagle Feather represents purity, lightness and gentleness. Purity in mind, body and spirit is achieved in old age. Elders become frail and weak like children. It is a very honorable age that speaks no arrogance or greed but the fulfillment of life to the best of one's ability. They become the keepers of the wisdom with peaceful energy, authority and purpose. Elders are as highly esteemed as the Eagle.

Once again the quill represents the beginning and ending in the spiritual journey of life. Death is at the end of the Cycle of Life and is also a rite of passage into the spiritual world. The spirit lives on in the hearts and minds of loved ones into eternity. One has known his natural space, only once does he pass this way, he has made his journey. To honor death is to honor life as both are important in the spirit world.