

Fetishes

Fetishes are anything of a natural material that resembles the shape of an animal (be it created by nature or man). Native Americans believe the spirit of the animal and its spiritual powers dwell within the fetish. These powers may be invoked to aid and guide the possessor of the fetish.

In nature some animals are stronger than others, hence their power is greater. This is believed to be true for fetishes as well. There are six animals that are designated as guardians of the six directions:

North: Mountain Lion

West: Bear

South: Badger

East: Wolf

Zenith (upper region): Eagle

Nadir (lower region): Mole

The meanings applied to the various animals vary from tribe to tribe. However, common to nearly all tribes is the belief in the very great powers of the mountain lion, bear, wolf and eagle. The eagle is the messenger between Earth dwellers and the spirits above. His is the greatest blessing. The bear is the strongest healer and the wolf is especially known for his cunning. Among many tribes the mountain lion is the most powerful overall and used more than any other for success in hunting.

The fetish may be depicted with a spirit line (a lightning like line) that flows to the center of the body with an arrowhead at the end. This arrowhead points to the spiritual heart of the animal. This honors the animal's spirit. A prayer bundle, also called a medicine bundle, is sometimes attached to the back. Made up of sacred materials, such as turquoise, other stones, salt, shell, etc., it is an offering to the animal's spirit. This is both to encourage it to use its powers on one's behalf and to express gratitude for such.

In tribal life, so important are the fetishes that a special bowl is often made from native clay to hold the sacred cornmeal that feeds the animals' spirits. The fetishes themselves are often kept in the bowl when not in use. The bowls are adorned with carved fetishes and covered with crushed turquoise. They are kept in the possession of the medicine men of the tribe, as they are used to heal any ailment (mental or physical) that the members of the tribe may have. The powers of the fetishes are also called upon to meet the needs of the tribe as a whole, such as prosperity, security, or whatever may arise.

One's personal fetish serves the same basic purposes. It is often worn on a small leather pouch around the neck or the waist or in a pocket where it will not be exposed to the view of anyone else. When choosing a personal fetish go with the one you simply are most attracted to because that is the one you have a rapport with. That individual fetish is speaking to you. It is believed that if you are true to it, it will be true to you. The same guidance applies to choosing a fetish for a gift.

The Zuni Indians of New Mexico are the premier fetish carvers of the southwest. They are often called upon by other tribal peoples to make their ceremonial fetishes for them.

FETISHES & THEIR MEANINGS

ARMADILLO - SLOW, SURE, IN NO HURRY. GETS THINGS RIGHT. KEEPER OF THE HOME.

BADGER - BOLDNESS, PERSEVERANCE, INDIVIDUALITY. "**SOUTH**"

BAT - GUARDIAN OF THE NIGHT, CLEANER.

BEAR - STRENGTH, INTROSPECTION, POWER OF THE SOUL. LIGHTENS EMOTIONAL BURDENS. "**WEST**"

BEAVER - BUILDER. STRONG SENSE OF FAMILY & HOME. KEEPER OF THE WATERWAYS.

BUFFALO - ENDURANCE TO OVERCOME. GREAT EMOTIONAL COURAGE. PROVIDER OF ALL.

COYOTE - TRICKSTER. ASSOCIATED WITH LAUGHTER, HUMOR. WORKS WELL IN A GROUP.

DEER - GREAT POWER OF GENTLENESS.

DOLPHIN - TRUST, LOYALTY, SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP.

EAGLE - CREATOR, TEACHER, LOYALTY, GREAT INTEGRITY. SPIRIT OF CONNECTION TO THE DIVINE. "**SKY**"

ELK - STRENGTH, AGILITY, FREEDOM.

FISH - PURIFIER, CHARACTER. ABILITY TO HIDE EMOTIONS.

FOX - CAMOFLAGE, PROTECTION, INGENUITY, QUICKNESS, GREAT PASSION.

FROG - RAINMAKER. SILENTLY WARNS OF DANGER. ASSOCIATED WITH ABUNDANCE.

HAWK - MESSENGER OF THE SKY, OBSERVER.

HORNED TOAD - SELF-RELIANCE, LONGEVITY. PROTECTS ANCESTRAL BOUNTY.

HORSE - SWIFTNESS, STRENGTH, ENLIGHTENMENT. POSSESSES HEALING POWERS.

HUMMINGBIRD - MESSENGER, STOPPER OF TIME.

KOKOPELLI - FERTILITY, MUSIC, JOY.

LIZARD - CONSERVATION, AGILITY.

MOLE - AMPLIFIES CONNECTION WITH THE EARTH. PROTECTS THE FIELDS. "**UNDERGROUND**"

MOOSE - HEADSTRONG, UNSTOPPABLE, LONGEVITY.

MOUNTAIN LION - LEADERSHIP, RESOURCEFULNESS. GREAT COURAGE. HIGH STANDARDS. "**NORTH**"

MOUSE - TIMID, SECRETIVE, SNEAKY.

OWL - WISDOM, PATIENCE, MENTAL ENDURANCE. CONTROLS DARK SIDE OF NATURE. KEEPER OF THE NIGHT.

OTTER - LAUGHTER, CURIOSITY, MISCHIEVOUS.

PHEASANT - CONFIDENCE, ATTRACTION, FLAMBOYANCE.

QUAIL - SACRED SPIRAL, CEREMONIAL, HOLY.

RABBIT - VIRTUE, SERENITY, LOW CURIOSITY. QUIET TALENT. RESTRAINED PASSION.

RACCOON - BANDIT, SHY, RESOURCEFUL.

RAM - SENSE OF SELF-WORTH. ASSURES AN INCREASE IN FLOCKS.

RAVEN - TRICKSTER, TEACHER, HOARDER.

SEAL - FAMILY ORIENTED. POSSESSES POWER IN NUMBERS.

SHEEP - CHARITY, ELEGANCE, PASSION. BEST AT THE ARTS. TALENTS BRING RICHES.

SKUNK - WARY, CONSPICUOUS, INTENSE.

SNAKE - TRANSMUTATION. LIFE, DEATH, REBIRTH.

SPIDER - CREATIVE PATTERN OF LIFE.

SQUIRREL - NATURAL INTELLIGENCE. SAVER. PROTECTS RESERVES.

TURKEY - SMART, ELUSIVE, FESTIVE.

TURTLE - LONGEVITY, FERTILITY. SYMBOL OF MOTHER EARTH, HOME AND RELIABILITY.

WOLF - TEACHER, FAMILY ORIENTED, WARM. DEEPLY SPIRITUAL. PATHFINDER ON JOURNEY OF SURVIVAL. "**EAST**"