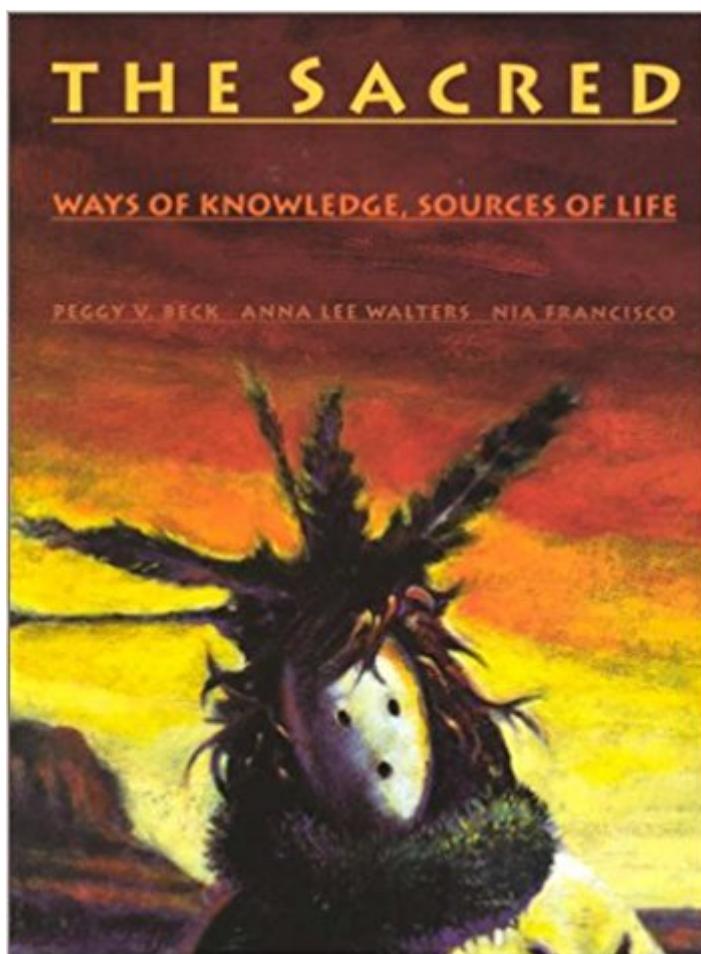


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# The Sacred: Ways Of Knowledge Sources Of Life



## **Synopsis**

'The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Sources of Life' offers an uncommonly wide-ranging consideration of the ways in which Native Americans view the world, their place in it, and their responsibilities to it. This world is not only physical, but spiritual, and 'The Sacred' describes the 'meaning, role and function of sacred traditional practices and observances in the lives of The People, individually and collectively.'

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## **Customer Reviews**

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Since I purchased my first copy of "The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Sources of Life," I have done all I can to promote the book as the best way to start learning about Native Americans and American Indian Life-Ways. I recommend it to everyone. In 1987 I published the following book review in the prestigious American Indian Quarterly. Some twenty-one years later, my beliefs remain the same, but my hopes that "The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Sources of Life" would become a

regularly used textbook and standard reference book in libraries remain unfulfilled. And for me the question remains, how do I get people to read this book? I did my part, utilizing it as a textbook for classes I taught at Rocky Mountain College, Northern Montana College, and Carroll College, all here in Montana. When I left Carroll College, the instructor who took my place continued to use "The Sacred" for several years. Since then, however, it has been dropped for more "up to date" books, hoping to reinvent the wheel. Here, then, is my published review:One is seldom afforded the opportunity to read such an exemplary book as Peggy V. Beck and Anna L Walters' "The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Sources of Life." As alaudatory contribution towards better literature on American Indians, "The Sacred" serves as both a fundamental resource and a textbook. Although it has been ten years since the book was first published, the book is once more available for classroom use. It is fitting, therefore, that it be re-reviewed in an effort to bring renewed interest in "The Sacred" as both a textbook and a resource.The impetus for writing and publishing "The Sacred" is to provide a textbook that emphasizes "the traditional characteristics of sacred ways in North America" (p. xii; emphasis in the original). However, these traditional values are also viewed by the authors as the foundation for thinking in contemporary American Indian communities. I would say that Beck and Walters have indeed provided an omibus resource, and now it is up to academia to kindle the study of "The Sacred."As a textbook, "The Sacred" is edited into an appropriate, systematic framework that allows the student to move from basic ideas and definitions to contemporary problems and attitudes, building upon itself (the knowledge) to create a holistic understanding of the sources of Indian life. The appropriate use of maps, charts, photographs, and superb illustrations enhances, as well as stimulates, the reader's interest in the topics. Each chapter has a bibliopahy peculiar to its subject matter, and a more general bibliography is located at the end of the book. The reference section contains a glossary of difficult and/or misconstured terms, a listing of films and filstrips pertinent to each chapter (and where to obtain them), and an index.The text is an integrated combination of reportorial, narrative, biogrpahical, and interpretive styles of writing that reveal the attitudes of the authors along woth those of the cited contributors and "The People" themselves. In discussing the subjects or themes of each chapter, historical influences are fully inorporated with contemporary issues to create a relavantly circular presentation. This stylistic technique, when comined with the book's authoritativeness and perspectus, transposes into a highly readable and pertinent textbook for students of all levels of knowledge. Additionally, documents and recorded oral commentaries, which the authors appropriately use to support their detailed treatment and general themes, contribute to make "The Sacred" an invaluable reference as well.The authors begin "The Sacred" by distinguishing between the concepts of religion, the sacred, world view, and

how these ideas function in each person's daily awareness. From this foundation they develop their ideas concerning the way thinking about the sacred--indeed, ways for thinking about the sacred for most American Indians:1. A belief in or knowledg of unseen powers, or what some people call The Great Mystery.2. Knowledge that all things in the universe are dependent on each other.3. Personal worship reinforces the bond between the individual, the community, and the great powers. Worship is a personal commitment to the sources of life.4. Sacred trations and persons knowledgeable in them are responsible for teaching morals and ethics.5. Most communities and tribes have trained practitioners who have been given names such as medicine men, priests, shamans, caciques, and other names. These individual also have titles given them by The People which differ from tribe to tribe. These individuals are responsible for specialized, perhaps secret knowledge. They help pass knowledge and sacred practices from generation to generation, storing what they know in their memories.6. A belief that humor is a necessary part of the sacred. And a belief that human beings are often weak--we are not gods--and our weakness leads us to do foolish things; therefore, clowns and similar figures are needed to show us how we act and why. (pp. 8-9)Once the reader learns what the sacred entails, along with the ways of thinking about the sacred, it becomes obvious that the sacred permeates American Indian lifeways. The remainder of "The Sacred," then, develops and inetrates these ideas within various components of American Indian life-ways. Beck and Waters' book is an original and qualified book that is comprehensive in its usefulness. That is, it is a book that should be considered for use in more than just American Indian Religion classes. "The Sacred" is totally appropriate for introductory classes or general classes like Indians of North America (for which I am successfully using the text). "The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Sources of Life" is a positive addition to the literature on American Indian Studies, and is one that should be seriously considered for adoption in courses treating topics on American Indians. Please, read "The Sacred," and then help me pass the word. However, also remember that this is not a novel or a popular reading book, and as such you may find parts hard to understand. If you do, contact a Native American Studies program or feel free to email me. Please Note: If this review was not helpful to you, I would appreciate learning the reason(s) so I can improve my reviews. My goal is to provide help to potential buyers, not get into any arguments. So, if you only disagree with my opinion, could you please say so in the comments and not indicate that the review was not helpful. Thanks.

very interesting read!

Recommended by my professor when I asked for more material on spirituality in Native American

communities. Excellent so far.

Just as described, really good condition! Thank you :)

Thank you, I received book and it is exactly what I need for class, and in perfect condition. ~Thanks again

I got this book right in time for classes to start and it's in really good condition. Thanks so much!

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