

POST BATTLE COUNSEL

The elder chief signaled to assemble a tribal council that evening. His warriors had recently returned from an intense battle fighting off a nomadic warring group of marauders. For many of his tribe's young warriors, this had been their first encounter.

All were gathered by the ritual fires with teepees nearby and the vigilant guards out there on watch. Shaman care and herbal treatments from the medicine man continued to be administered to the injured. Squaws were attentive to those in physical need. An aura of freshly won peace pervaded the setting. All listened intently as the greying elder chief rose to speak. He spoke thusly:

“Life comes to us in a circle. The clouds and light breezes support our joy when all is well. The storms and streams carry the blood of the fallen. It appears as a contrast, but the highs and the lows are all a sacred part of the One. The mysteries surround us - birth, life, death. Mother Nature always holds us in loving hands.

Battle, my stalwart braves, teaches us The Great Lesson. It is **The Wisdom of The Wild**. As animals learn to kill for survival, we who walk upright are also forced to learn to overcome attackers by means of bloodshed. It is the way of Nature.

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Know what is important to you. Your family, your brothers and sisters, your teachers, your tribe. For these, we defend. For these, we risk all that is sacred. We risk Life itself.

We are given water, fire, valleys for grain and fruit, roving herds of buffalo, trees – skins - caves for shelter and wraps. The beauty of growing things, the light that plays on surfaces, the moon and stars beyond our reach; ALL are given to use. We possess them not, but we learn by observation and teachings how to make best use of each.

The Wild challenges us. We are to learn from each encounter with the Wild. As a warrior, the learning must come fast in order to survive. Each battle presents something new. We must be quick mentally and possess strength physically. Skills must be maintained and sharpened. For The Wild can be unforgiving. Total awareness must be encouraged. If you have emerged from your first conflict unscathed, you will then soon be elevated in expectation and performance in your next.

The Wild may rip at your soul. Resist that. Resist by being in touch with your higher purpose. You are here for a reason: to make your individual contribution for the good of the whole. Wrap the battle's troubling memories in a knowingness of the importance of you as a vital and significant Being. Find peace within.

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When doubts cast shadows, go to the truth of your existence. It is found in Nature, alongside the Wild. There is interplay. You must learn to handle both sides skillfully - both are contained within your circle. Focus your own energy into light-form and shine it on both the highs and the lows of your experience. Be a glowing example to others whom you serve.

However, when in the field, develop a sense of how conflicts proceed. Know what goes on around you – using observation, calculation, and imagination. Study the enemy's ways, both in the heat and in the calm. A close association exists between thinking and doing. Listen to the elders who may no longer bear arms. They possess the Wisdom of the Wild. Each has seen it from a different perspective. Each has lessons to teach.

Now I charge each of my returning braves to set aside time for solitude. Seek a period of aloneness, just you and Nature. Feel each of your feelings. Explore within. Experience an internal quest for visions of yourself in the many roles of manhood: warrior, mate, father, provider, supporter, teacher, leader.

Emerge from your quest with a certainty of knowledge of who you are and who you shall become. Then proceed on the path of growth, solid in the foundation of your self-worth. For, my Sons, you are the seeds

which will grow this tribe in strength and vitality. You are once acorns who are now recognizable as the oaks of our nation. You have earned the tribe's respect and honor. Use this knowledge to deepen our Tribal Wisdom."

Then the revered Elder Chief raised his right hand in the air, gazed lovingly at all the members of his Tribe and uttered the evening blessing:

"May the Great Spirit reside within - and may you recognize the Presence - and walk steadily along its Path. Go forth and flourish."